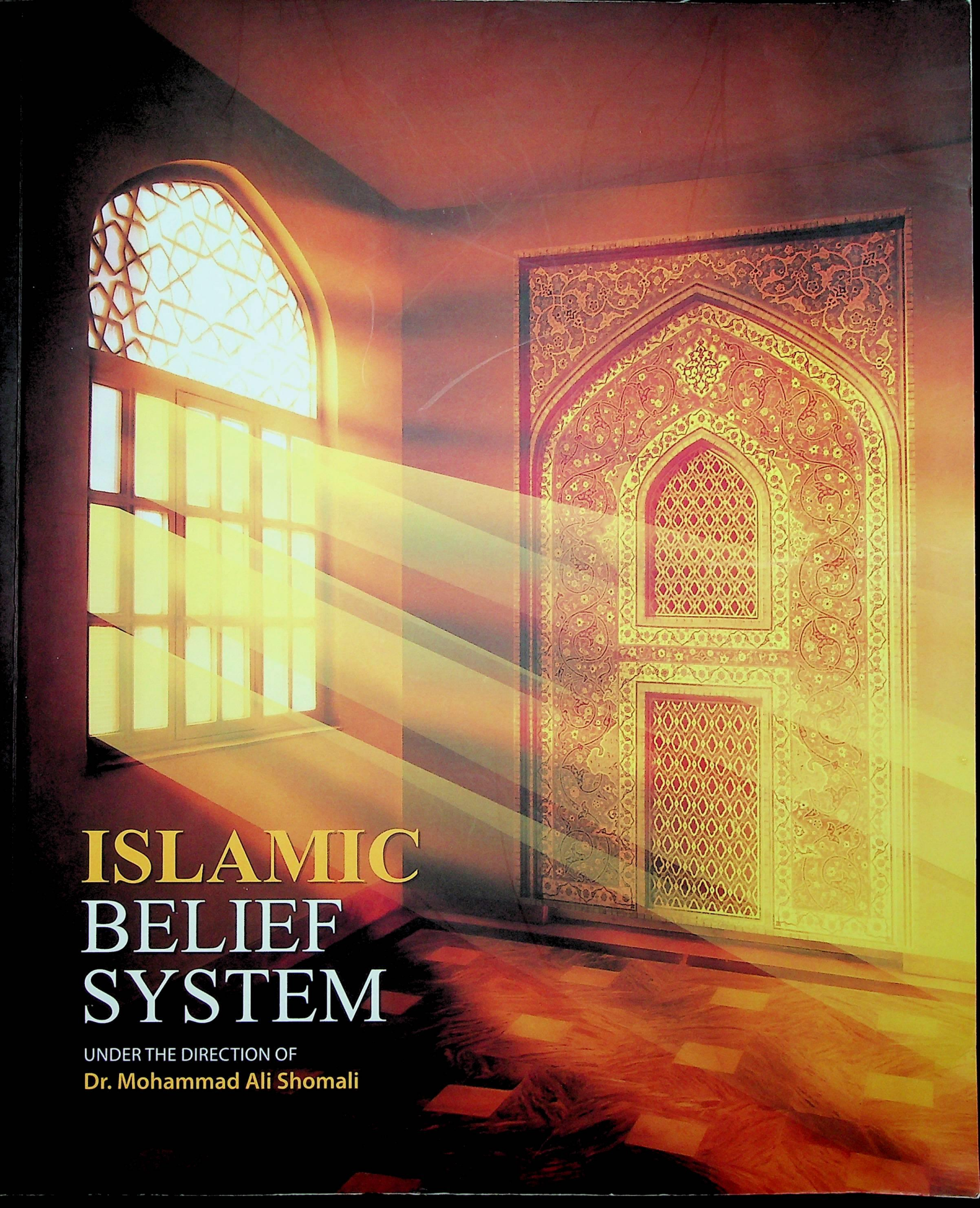

ISLAMIC BELIEF SYSTEM

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali

ISLAMIC CENTRE OF ENGLAND
www.ic-el.com

RISALAT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
www.risalatinstitute.com

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

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In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Foreword

There is no doubt about the importance of education in Islam. To realize the great significance that Islam attaches to teaching and learning, it suffices to remember that in the Qur'an, God describes Himself as a teacher: "The All- Beneficent has taught the Qur'an. He created man, [and] taught him articulate speech." (55:1-4)

Indeed, God is the highest teacher and the Prophet (s) is the best seeker of knowledge. Addressing the Prophet (s), the Qur'an says: "He has taught you what you did not know and great is God's grace upon you." (4:113) Receiving divine knowledge makes the Prophet (s) the best teacher for mankind. He is a prophet on a mission to teach: "I am sent to teach." In four different places the Qur'an considers teaching the Book and wisdom as one of the most important missions of the Prophet (s) along with recitation of the divine verses and purification of people. This is in addition to the verses that solely mention teaching as one of the foundations of the mission of the Prophet (s), amongst which is the following verse: "We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them." (16:44)

According to hadiths, scholars (ʿulamā) are "the inheritors of the Prophets" and "the trustees of the Messengers." Therefore it is essential for them to offer all their efforts for the sake of teaching. A candle burns itself to give light and so does a scholar who both suffers from the ignorance of some people and also exhausts himself or herself in order to teach those who are interested. The ink of the scholars who put their very soul on paper in order to remove ignorance from the souls of those who lack knowledge is worth more than the blood of a martyr. Imam al-Sadiq (a) is quoted as saying:

> On the Day of Judgment, God gathers people on a platform and scales are placed there. Then the blood of martyrs is weighed in comparison to the ink of scholars and the ink of scholars is favoured over the blood of martyrs.

Learning is of such great importance in Islam that people are told to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave. People are also told to seek knowledge even if it requires travelling to the furthest of places. No one should consider what they know as sufficient and therefore should always seek more knowledge. Indeed even the Prophet (s), who was taught by God, was supposed to ask God for more: "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (20:114)

Thanks to Almighty God there is a strong interest in learning religious teachings in most parts of our community throughout the world. Some people remain in their own countries and study in the seminaries there whilst others are so enthhusiastic for learning that they leave their homes and hometowns behind in order to enter the major Islamic Seminaries, responding to the call of God: "Why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion" (9:122). Those whose life circumstances do not allow them the time to study full time or who have chosen other ways to serve God and give meaning to their lives, still appreciate any opportunity to benefit from the knowledge of scholars be it through reading books and journals or by participating in religious meetings and courses. Many of us have often witnessed sisters and

brothers who participate in educational courses which require that they come to regular or intensive classes right after their daily work and also during the weekends, which is their only time to rest before the next working week. Their thirst for knowledge is something to be envied. We should all ask Almighty God to make us very thirsty for knowledge and wisdom and to give us the opportunity of being close to and benefiting from pious scholars.

Since all people are obliged to seek knowledge and to facilitate the way for others to do so, along with some brothers in Qum we decided to put together all that a Muslim youth needs to know before entering university or the workplace or embarking on married life and to make it available in the form of an educational package consisting of five books.

Great efforts have been put into this project to the extent that, for example, for designing the outline of the first book alone we had almost thirty meetings. Once the outline was ready I consulted people involved in religious education in numerous countries, asking for their opinions. Thanks to God, the logical order of the project and its comprehensiveness were appreciated by everyone contacted and they all asked for the books to be made available to them in their own language.

The working titles of these books are as follows:

1. Islamic Belief System
2. Islamic Plan for Life
3. The Life of Lady Fatimah (a), the Imams (a) and the Shi'ites during Occultation
4. Imamate
5. Practical Rulings.

The first two books are designed to include the issues common to all Muslims and are suitable for both Shi'ites and Sunnites. Both of these books will have a reference book for use by teachers. The other three books address Shi'ite theological, jurisprudential and historical topics.

The first version of Islamic Belief System was compiled two years ago. However, it was decided that it should be taught in various centres around the world in order to receive feedback before publishing it. First of all, in Muharram of the year 1434 A.H., two scholars from the Institute taught the book to a group of teachers in Tanzania. After this successful experience, the book was taught to other groups in other countries. In the summer of 2013, I myself taught the book in Darussalam, Birmingham, Toronto, Hamburg and London and in Feb 2014 in London once again and afterwards in Qum. I also taught parts of the book in London and Dearborn.

The book was then reviewed and re-edited according to the feedback received and now I am very pleased to present it to our dear readers. Many requests have been received for translated versions of the book in different languages. We can now announce that by the grace of God, as soon as the second edition of the English version is ready, the process of translating the book into other languages will start.

The compilation work for the book Islamic Plan for Life is now almost complete. This summer, with various scholars, we taught the book to a group of university students from Britain who had gathered for a summer camp in Tanzania and later in August and September I taught it to another group in Stanmore, London.

As for the book on Imamate, the majority of the work is complete and we expect the first draft of the book to be ready for teaching by the beginning of the year 2015. We are also trying to finish the first draft of the books on Practical Rulings and the Life of Lady Fatimah (a), the Imams (a) and the

Shi'ites during Occultation, at some point in 2016.

I hereby offer my gratitude to all institutes and individuals who helped in the process of designing and compiling the books or in arranging or hosting the courses wherein the books were taught. For the most part, the first book was designed during my time as the Head of the Department of Religions in the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute with the help of the scholars of that department. With the establishment of the International Institute for Islamic Studies in 2009, the compilation of Islamic Belief System was started along with the designing and compilation of the other books.

As the work progressed it became clear that it would be necessary to dedicate more focus and time to the project. Hence, in the year 2012, Risalat International Institute was established in Qum. The main objectives of this institute are compiling books for teaching Islam in English and other European languages, holding educational courses for students, holding courses for teachers and supporting educational centres and schools by means of supplying and designing textbooks for them, providing them with teachers, evaluating their educational systems and offering certificates and diplomas. I feel it necessary to thank Hujjat ul-Islam wal-Muslimeen Sayyid Jawad Shahrestani for his encouragement and support for Risalat International Institute.

Islamic Belief System was compiled through close cooperation between Risalat International Institute, International Institute for Islamic Studies and Shahidayn Seminary. I hereby offer my sincere gratitude to the director of the Islamic Seminaries of Qum, Hujjat ul-Islam wal-Muslimeen Farrukh Faal and also the director of Shahidayn Seminary School, Hujjat ul-Islam wal-Muslimeen Tabataba'i for the support which they have shown towards this project.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our production and editing team:

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I humbly thank God for what has been achieved so far and ask Him for more strength so that we can continue on this path with firmer and steadier footsteps. It is only due to His grace that we received abundant assistance from various institutes in different parts of the world and that we managed to hold many educational courses in various countries. We are well aware that the present project can still be improved and therefore we humbly request our dear readers, especially scholars and teachers, to share their comments and suggestions with us and to remember us in their prayers. Walhamdulillāhi Rabbil-'ālamīn!

Mohammad Ali Shomali
London, 8 October 2014

Introduction

Human behavior is influenced by some fundamental beliefs and ideas to which a person attests. Usually, a person's fundamental beliefs enjoy a kind of relative coherence and unity; this coherence results in the formation of a set of aligned ideas and beliefs and constitute his doctrinal system. The fundamental beliefs of each person may, to a large extent, be self-formed and derived from experience and individual reflection, or they can be based on other sources, such as the divine teachings of prophets. The greater the extent of coherence of these beliefs would be and the more they lead to truth and salvation, the more they will be a light for the guidance and individual development of a person. Humans can, thanks to the two powerful tools of reason and innate nature (fitrah), which all benefit from in some way, assess the coherence and truthfulness of their self-formed beliefs or the teachings of various religions and, based on this assessment, adhere to these beliefs. Of course, the intellect and innate nature of a person can verify the doctrines of a religion only when the belief system of a religion has been conveyed accurately and completely to that person; if a person does not have sufficient awareness of its doctrines, or doctrines have mistakenly been attributed to a religion, then his judgments will be equally wrong.

Human behavior may be influenced by a set of fundamental beliefs and ideas to which a person attests. These beliefs can be derived from experience and individual reflection, external sources such as one's family and community or based on the divine teachings of prophets. Normally, a person's ideology is based on a relative coherence and unity of their beliefs which results in a set of aligned ideas and values that constitute his doctrinal system. The extent to which these principles lead to truth and salvation, the more they will be a light for the guidance and development of the individual. A person can assess the coherence and veracity of their belief system or the teachings of various religions by two powerful tools: reason and innate nature (fitrah). The intellect and innate nature can verify the doctrines of a religion only when it has been conveyed accurately and comprehensively. If a person does not have sufficient awareness of its doctrines or concepts have been mistakenly attributed to the religion, then his judgments will be equally wrong/incorrect.

The Islamic religion which was introduced to the world by Prophet Muhammad (s), invited all people to examine their own belief system and prohibited blind imitation. In this manual, the principles of Islam have been presented in a simple and progressive manner and the belief system has been examined from the viewpoint of the intellect and innate nature.

Lesson one focuses the students attention to the wonders and beauty of creation and depicts different aspects of order and harmony among the creatures of the world.

Proving the existence of God and His attributes is the primary focus in lesson two. The "argument from design", the "argument from fitrah" and the "cosmological argument" are three proofs for the existence of God presented in this lesson. With regard to these three arguments, some of the divine attributes have been explained and rational reasons for these divine attributes are expressed in a simple way. This lesson ends with some discussions related to the issue of Divine Wisdom and the problem of evil.

Lesson three is devoted to human creation, an overview of some of their unique physical and behavioral characteristics, provides proof for the immaterial dimension of humans and finally it takes a brief look at different features of their material and non-material being/existence.
The movement of the human toward perfection and correct ways of navigating along the path to felicity is the focus of the fourth lesson. There are discussions related to fitrah, reason and revelation as being three important means of guidance toward boundless perfection. Also, the issue of possible conflict between reason and revelation has been simply and clearly explained from the Islamic perspective. Other key discussions include prophets as preachers/messengers of revelation, their essential characteristics such as infallibility and spiritual purity and moral excellence. In addition to a study of individual and social characteristics of prophets, the most common and important proof of their prophecy, namely the presentation of miracles, has been examined.
The fifth lesson of this book focuses on the high ethical character and manner of living of the Prophet of Islam (s), as well as his everlasting miracle, the noble Quran and various miraculous aspects of this divine book.
In lesson six, the issue of the afterlife, which plays a critical role in Islamic instruction, especially in the luminous teachings of the noble Quran, has been studied. Topics such as death, the middle world (barzakh), resurrection and evidence for the existence of the hereafter have been discussed.
The final lesson of this book deals with the issue of human felicity as the main desire of all humans. After examining the relationship between the material and spiritual dimensions of human beings and the needs that arise from them, the way of providing for these needs is reviewed. Finally, proximity to God, which is closeness to the source of infinite perfection and encompasses all man's material and spiritual needs, is explained. In the second half of this lesson, human felicity and approaches taken by Islam for the full development of individual and social perfection are briefly described. A detailed discussion on this subject is presented in the second volume of this book.

Note to the Teachers

In the writing of this book, a number of educational methods have been employed to improve the process of teaching and learning. Our hope is that by the completion of the manual students will have a better understanding of the subjects, enhanced their ability to analyze the various topics and gained a deeper insight into Islam, Insha'Allah. It should be noted that the learning activities presented in each lesson have been designed in a way that they maximize collaboration among students for comprehension and reflection on the issues raised. Group participation/discussions will elevate the learning and development of the students. For teaching this book, it is necessary to note the following points:

- The minimum time required to teach all the subjects in this book is 40 to 45 hours.
- The sections entitled "Activity", "Discussion Activity" and "Reading Comprehension" are to be carried out by the students and counted as classroom activity, contributing to their final grade.
- References have been cited under the headings of, "Reference" and "Web Links"; at the discretion of the teacher and according to the availability of the referenced material, students can be tasked with undertaking research on the related subjects.

• Passages under the heading of, "Case Study" have been written for students to perform further reading on the related subject and therefore teachers should not compel students to read or memorize them. However, since these texts can aid students to better understand the subject, it is recommended to mention them while teaching.
• Other learning activities such as, "Think About", "Progress Tracking", "Links" and "Pillars of Wisdom" are also provided to aid the students, therefore teachers should not compel students to study them or to ask them questions based on these supplemental references.
• Teachers, at their discretion, can task students with the memorization of the English translations of all or some of the verses and narrations mentioned within the lessons.

This book was planned and written by a team of Islamic scholars and senior teachers. Their objective was to produce a book that would provide guidance for you to become familiar with the Islamic belief system. The book offers you plenty of assessment material for practice and includes a variety of interactive and non-interactive activities to support your learning.

How To Use This Book

This book provides you with information about Islam and its belief system covered in seven units which encompass the following subjects: Cosmology, Theology, Anthropology, Prophethood, The Prophet of Mercy, Eschatology and Felicity.

Features:

- **Learning Objectives**
  The learning objectives are listed at the beginning of each unit.
- **Key Terms**
  Definitions are provided to enhance understanding of key terms.
- **Links**
  Direct you towards other similar points in the book.
- **Web Links**
  Websites that contain useful information about the topic(s).
- **Reference**
  Resources that will increase your knowledge about related issues.
- **Activity**
  Exercises which will reinforce the material you have learned.
- **Discussion Activity**
  Short points for deliberation within small groups.
- **Think About**
  Ideas which will help you to consider the topic from a different perspective.
- **Progress Tracking**
  Further clarification about some of the underlying themes within the text.
- **Examiner's Tips**
  Tip's that will help you prepare for your exam.
- **Pillars of Wisdom**
  Quotes to familiarize you with hadiths from the Holy Prophets (s) or Imams (as).
- **Case Study**
  Interesting stories and useful details to enhance one's awareness about the subject(s) discussed in the chapter.
- **Summary**
  A brief overview of some of the main ideas discussed in the unit.

Objectives

- To reflect on some of the marvels of
- To review some examples of how an
- To understand that there is a goal to
- To highlight the design and order ge

Sixty-Meter H

We live in a world that is full of wonders, wh mind. Perhaps the wonders that exist in this w perspectives.

The first prominent feature of this world which despite the many scientific advances tha and planetary systems are still being discovere are millions and even billions of light years a hand, the more that tiny particles are exa microscopes, the more layers and even tinier these tiny particles are millions, or even b particles that can be seen with the eye – an progress.

The second feature of this world can be fou beauty of each one of the creatures in this w (e.g. the bee) can be the basis of research f around the world.

The third prominent feature is the peculia creatures and components of this world. It ha advanced machine with infinite parts; all o complete harmony within this gigantic syster aim. If we consider these features, perhaps would be "order".

Now, let's take a look at the amazing struc body is composed of 100 trillion (100,000 constituent parts of the human body are 500 high tower. What is even more amazing is th breathe, and reproduce. Every single cel precision and accuracy of a dutiful worker interfering in the work of the other cells. Fo eyelids only grow to an extent that does not The eyelids partake of a flexible quality wh and close to protect the eyeballs.

Progress Tracking

Every creature plays a role in the system of nature and no useless or ineffective organ can be found within them, even though to us, some creatures appear to have no benefit.

The Graveyard of Cells

Perhaps you have thought about the existence of insects such as beetles and flies: what roles do they have and whether their non-existence would leave a vacuum in the world. That some animals and plants appear to be useless to us is not surprising. However, for our body organs to have no role or purpose, seems strange. For example, there is a gland in humans called the thymus located in the chest behind the breastbone (sternum). Although the gland was identified and named in the era of ancient Greece, it was not known to have any significant role, and was considered to be pretty useless, until in 1961 Jacques Miller was able to perform a series of experiments and identify the critical role of this gland. Now, medical students are well aware of the thymus as it is considered as the graveyard of dead cells; it has a unique role in the immune system and without it, we would not survive.

The body's immune system is like a great army consisting of various military ranks. One of the most important ranks is the T cell. When foreign organisms like viruses and bacteria enter the body, they are destroyed by these cells. These cells, like other cells in the blood, are derived from stem cells in bone marrow. Originally they are immature cells, which for training and development are sent to the thymus. In addition to learning military skills, they are trained to identify the enemy. This training is a very important and precise matter, because if this powerful military stages a coup against the human body, it can end its life. Therefore it must be able to precisely identify billions of cells of the body in order to distinguish between native and foreign cells. This knowledge is acquired in the embryonic period. At a certain stage of the embryonic period, cells from each of the different types of cells of the body are sent to the thymus as representative cells.

On the surface of every cell there are receptor molecules. Through the receptor molecules on the cell's surface, T cells are able to differentiate between native and foreign cells. When cells in the body send their representatives to the thymus, T cells match themselves with them. We can say that all of the body's cells send locks to the thymus in order that the appropriate keys to them are made in the thymus. Thus, every time the T cell police patrol encounters a cell, it tests its lock; any time it can open its lock it identifies it as native, otherwise it considers it an enemy and combats it. The training period in the thymus is tough. In this course, T cells are evaluated and tested. Field trials of military offenders and traitors are held in the thymus. T cells that attack native cells are sentenced to death by the thymus and are destroyed.

Interestingly, super intelligent immune cells sometimes make the work of doctors difficult. This is because when an organ is transplanted into another person, the T cells do not have any record of the cells in the new organ, and without knowing the intention of the doctor or patient, considers them as enemies and repulses them. That is why doctors are forced to prescribe drugs that weaken the soldiers.

Think About

If you think that some of these lights are from stars that have already died, how does that make you feel? Are you afraid? Are you excited?

Strange Occurrences

Have you ever thought that maybe the thing
It seems pretty ridiculous, but the fact is that so
even exist. By this, we do not mean illusions,
things in the real world. Since a long time ago
now we are able to see them. Before we and our
they had ceased to exist. Actually, some of th
have been dead for centuries. The distance betw
extent that their light takes centuries to reach th
see their light which radiated in the distant past
explosion of a star that exploded 170,000 years

The Vastness of the Universe

To know the exact dimensions of the universe is very difficult. By placing multiple zeros, we try to draw a comparison between earth and the universe around us. However, the reality is much larger than what we can imagine. If one night we were able to get away from the artificial lights of the city, which obscure the light from the stars, we would see an amazing sky above us. Without a telescope we would be able to see three thousand stars. Some stars are much larger than the sun, such as Betelgeuse which is 650 times larger than the sun: its diameter is approximately 900 million kilometers in length. The diameter of the sun is approximately 109 times larger than that of the earth. Another point of interest is the numbers of stars that are visible on a dark night are not even a thousandth or a millionth of the stars existing in the universe. Scientists have estimated that there are 100 billion trillion stars in the universe. Furthermore, recent studies conducted using the Keck Telescope in Hawaii put the estimate to 300 sextillion (23 zeros after the number 3). This number of stars does not include other amazing celestial bodies.

Quasars are the brightest celestial objects
were considered as being among the stars. Qua
but they are brighter than hundreds of galaxie
1960, but astronomers only reached an agreem
came to the conclusion that a quasar is a com
galaxy that has a black hole within it. The ene
much as 1000 times the energy released from
than 200 thousand quasars have been identifie
million light years away, while the furthest one
ponder upon these numbers and dimensions, y
its grandeur and vastness, is equivalent to a
how much space you occupy in this world.

Activity

By making use of reliable books and websites, research more on quasars. Write down the findings of your research in 300-400 words.

The wonderful and mysterious world of animals is so broad that thousands of books and scien-tific papers have been published on this subject. Many scientists have acknowledged that there are still many unknown facts about the lives of animals that humans have not been able to iden-tify and explore. We will mention some examples of the beauties and wonders of the animal kingdom in order to make us think more deeply about the mysteries of creation.

Discussion Activity

Before reading this chapter, have a discussion with your partner about the wondrous lives of ants that you have heard or seen.

The Mysterious World of Ants

Ants are creatures that are intelligent, hardworking, combative, responsible and devoted to their group. The entire life of an ant is spent in effort and all ants have a similar type of life. Whether soldier or worker ants, they are in the service of the community and strive for the survival of their colony.

Ants live a social life and have great respect for their rules. Ants are one of the world's most regulated creatures. In every colony there are three groups of ants:

The Queen: Her job is to lay eggs and give birth to babies.

Worker Ants: They do not have wings and their work is to collect seeds and food, dig nests and protect the eggs and babies.

Male and Female Ants: They make up the smallest number of the inhabitants of a nest and pos-sess four thin wings.

Ants have different groups; some have only a few hundred ants within them and in others, there are several million. In any case, the responsibilities are divided in each group and each ant per-forms its own tasks. In the world, there exist various types of ants and depending on the envi-ronment they live in, each one eats its own particular food.

Now, we will look at some of the different kinds of ants to try to understand some of the wonders that this small insect possesses.

Harvester Ant

The harvester ant is an ant which gathers material from plants surrounding it, then takes it back to its nest to make use of it.

ANT

Miller Ant

This type of ant has a large head and powerful jaws to grind seeds.

Dairying/Farming Ant

A type of aphid exists which eats from plants, resulting in the release of honeydew. The dairying ant takes these aphids and nourishes them. The ant brings leaves for the aphid to its nest and 'milks' it for its honeydew. The actions of this ant are like that of a shepherd who takes care of his sheep.

Gardener Ant

The Gardener Ant grows tiny mushrooms upon which it depends for food. For the cultivation of mushrooms it needs to create a garden and so it makes a paste and grows mushrooms on that.

Think About

Have you thought about how these ants, which sacrifice for the sake of their colony, are appreciated? Their names are not mentioned in any media as being ones who are self-sacrificing or brave. But, this sacrificing has taken place in the world for thousands of years without a reward. What is the secret of this type of life? What motivation or aim is hidden within this form of sacrifice? Keep in mind that the life of the ant, just like other animals is based on instincts and it is these instincts which guide every creature towards its particular goal.

Carnivorous Ant (Army Ant)

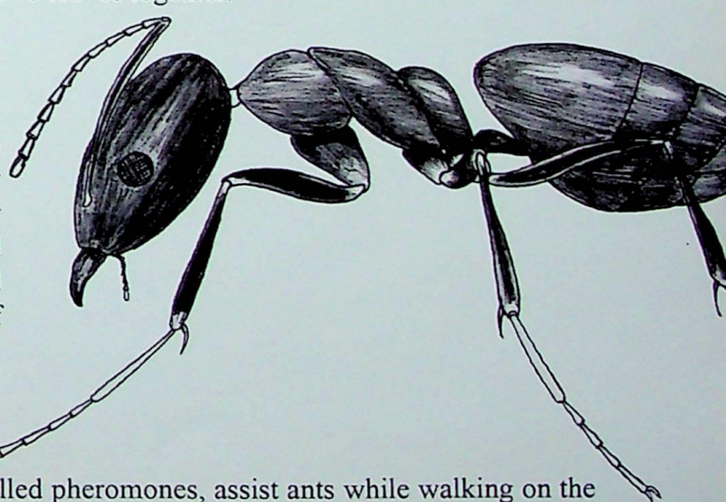
Among ants, the army ant is the most fearsome, which lives in tropical regions and only eats flesh. This ant, launches military expeditions, travels in columns of several centimeters width and hundreds of meters in length. In this column, worker ants carry the larvae and soldier ants protect the flanks. When the column is in motion, nothing but water or fire is able to prevent it from moving. Sometimes when there is a large body of water in front of the column, some of the ants stick together like a rope and form a bridge so that the other ants can pass over the water. However, the ants that formed the bridge afterwards drown in the water; this is a sacrifice that they make for their fellow ants.

Weaver Ant

These ants make their nests between the leaves of tropical trees. First, they choose two leaves near to each other, and then some ants take the edge of one leaf and press down on it. The back and legs are held tightly by another group of ants and when the edges of two leaves become next to each other, one of the worker ants chooses a larva that is in the last stages of turning into pupate and by pressing the larva, drops of silk are produced. This worker ant moves the larva back and forth and with the silk stitches the two leaves together.

The Future Awareness of Ants

Within the Honeypot Ants there is a special group of ants who hang from the ceiling of the nest and they are fed with nectar from those ants who have returned from seeking food. Their stomachs become like bags filled with nectar. When food becomes scarce, these ants are able to retrieve the nectar and dispense droplets of fluid from their stomachs into the mouths of other ants for them to eat.



Guiding Ants

Chemical molecules called pheromones, assist ants while walking on the ground to leave their imprint and guide other ants to food. This act is complex and requires training among the ants. An instructor (female) has the responsibility to train other ants in this task. First she finds a novice who is willing to follow her to look for food and provides it with instructions. When the student walks, it repeatedly comes to a halt and with its legs, hits the abdomen and legs of the instructor for it to know that she should continue with the process. If the student does not perform this act, the instructor halts. If the distance between the two becomes too great, the instructor slows down until the student speeds up. The student ant learns so well from the instructor ant that it can become a teacher and allow the transmission of knowledge between the ants to be maintained.

There are amazing instances of mutual coexistence between different kinds of animals. For example, there is a special type of fish called the remora, which attaches itself to sharks with the aid of a sucking disc which is located on top of its head. Fastening itself to a shark, the remora fish initiates a symbiotic coexistence: The remora gets a free and safe ride-as there are not many fish bold enough to attack a shark-and eats off of its host's leftovers and in turn benefits the shark by cleaning it free of harmful parasites.

Another instance of a mutual relationship in the animal world is the peculiar relation that exists between a certain species of fish called goby and a type of blind shrimp, in the depths of some seas and oceans. The near blind furrowing shrimp attaches its antennae to the goby, following it around in search of food. In the event of an approaching danger, the goby notifies the shrimp by flicking the shrimp with its tail. The goby, in return, benefits from the shrimp by inhabiting the furrow made by the shrimp.

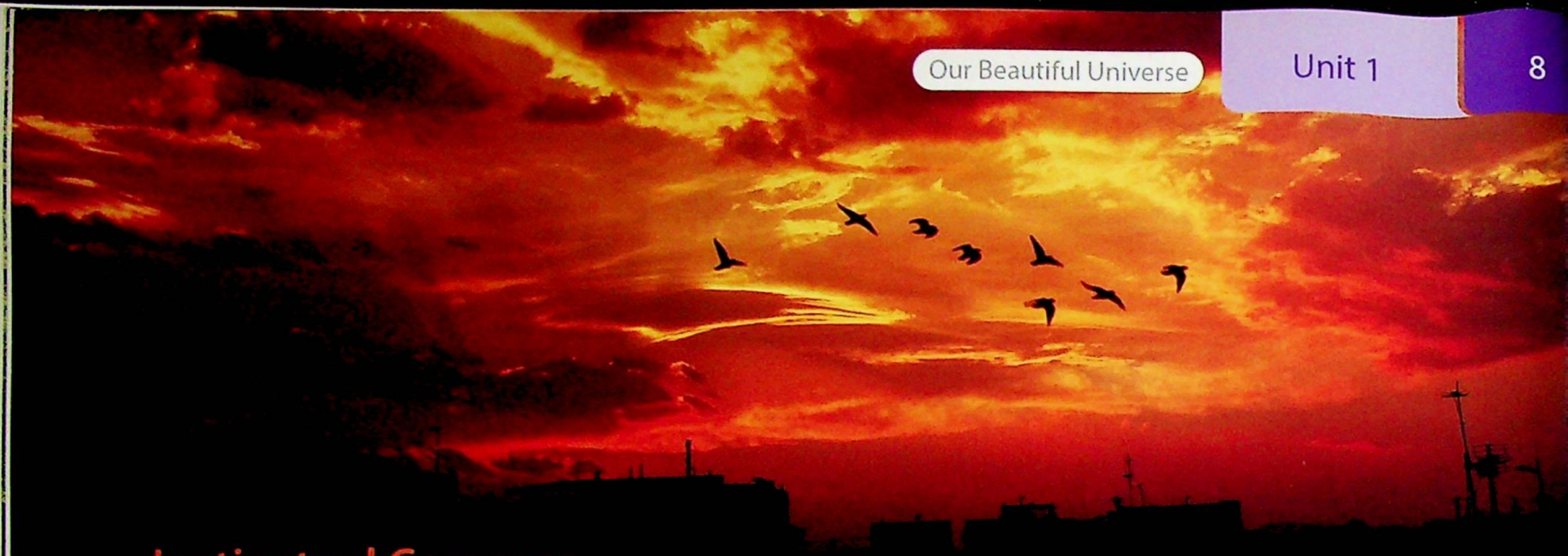
A Splendid Coexistence

A Splendid

It is very enlightening to reflect on
color when confronted with danger; s
and yet others avoid danger using cle
also naturally equipped with stealth c
for instance, blend into their seabed b
covered with sand, the stingray camo
stingray makes its skin to resemble si

Spotting frogs in forests and jungle
There is however, a type of colorful f
it is very easy to spot them, these colo
no danger. If hunted by birds or sna
beautiful frogs are poisonous. Thei
predators try to avoid these frogs, an

The animal world provides nume
Observing how animals live in su
accommodate their inhabitants' phys
most gargantuan to the most minute,
nourishment, guaranteeing the survi



Instinctual Compass

Today, navigational devices are an integral part of humans' lives. The flight of airplanes, launch-ing of satellites, sailing of ships, the walks of hikers and even finding the homes of friends would be difficult or impossible without these devices. This knowledge was obtained as a result of continuous efforts of scientists over the years. However, it is interesting that we are perhaps the last creatures to use navigation systems. From thousands of years ago, other creatures on this planet have been using their own navigation systems. Of course their systems of navigation have no cost and do not pollute the environment or cause physical harm for themselves or others.

The robin, domestic doves, butterflies, termites, flies, blind mice, ants, elephants, eels and even small bacteria are among the animals that can detect the Earth's magnetic force to identify their route. For years scientists have investigated how animals use this power. On the beaks of some birds are tiny structures in the nanometer range, which by being sensitive to the Earth's magnetic field, helps them to navigate.

Migratory birds, for instance, have an instinctual compass that guides them on their migration paths. Red knots are a type of migratory bird common to Canada. When cold weather sets in, rendering their Canadian home inhospitable, these birds travel to South America. The distance they travel in this yearly migration is approximately 16,000 kilometers. In spring, red knots travel the same distance back to Canada. How do these birds succeed in traveling such a great distance without getting lost? Some scientists are of the opinion that they can sense the magnetic field that exists between the North and South Poles and utilize it in tracing their migratory path.

Insects are relatively tiny creatures, yet they employ spectacular methods of aviation. Scientists now know that butterflies and moths are capable—like birds and mammals—of traveling over long distances that may span hundreds of kilometers. To cover such long-distance migration, these insects ride the winds.

Many insects embark on seasonal migration. Certain butterflies, for instance, migrate from the British Isles to the Mediterranean region in autumn, returning back in spring. How these butterflies traveled such long distances without losing their bearings was long a mystery for the scientific community. Tracking these butterflies over a seven-year period, British scientists realized these butterflies enjoyed an internal compass, which enabled them to maintain their orientation, and used different streams of wind to achieve speeds of up to 100 kilometers per hour, hastening their travel.

Activity

Try to find some examples of other animals that make use of natural compasses and explain how animals can use this feature to find routes.

How?

Scientists Explain

Scientists have found similar structures in the bodies of other organisms, which can identify the smallest change within the Earth's magnetic field; these structures then transmit a signal to the brain. Scientists believe that the structures for detecting the magnetic force must be related to certain neurons within the brain, because they observed that with changes in the Earth's magnetic field, these specific structures release ions; these ions through association with specific neurons of the nerves, transmit necessary signals to the brain.

In 1970, scientists discovered that when there was a change in a magnetic field, certain chemi-cal reactions occurred in the bodies of animals. In continuation of the research, it was found that the reaction takes place in the pigments present in the eye. In 1990, biochemists found that a protein named cryptochrome exists in the retinal pigment of mammals, which is associated with a sense of orientation. Years later, they discovered that this protein is located in specialized cells in the retina. They observed that along with changes in the magnetic field, a beam or an optical photon collides with these cells and stimulates circulation in the electrons of the protein. The circulation of the electrons has some kind of effect on animal navigation. In another recent study, scientists have identified the electromagnetic sense of some fish and sharks. They found that these animals, having a special mechanism, are capable of sensing the weakest electric field, at a billionth of a volt, in the surrounding environment.

Reading Comprehension

1) Approximately how many cells compose the human body? In your opinion, will a day come when we can say that all aspects and wonders of the human have been discovered?

2) True or false: Many of the organs in the human body serve no purpose whatsoever. In fact, the thymus gland is a key example of a useless organ.

3) Many of the stars which we currently observe in the sky no longer exist. If they have ceased to exist, what allows us to continue witnessing them?

4) Why is it said that ants are one of the world's most regulated creatures?

5) What is an instinctual compass? How does this sense aid some animals in their migration?

6) In your opinion, what is the most important factor that led to the creation of an amazing, harmonious coexistence among the animals of the world?

Objectives

- To prove the existence of God
- To study how the argument from design confirms the existence of God
- To understand the Divine Nature argument for the existence of God
- To learn the cosmological argument for the existence of God
- To become familiar with the Divine Attributes

Order in the Creation of Nature

Our natural environment is permeated with an amazing degree of order. The following passage from one of Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib's (a.s.) speeches eloquently characterizes the intricate design on display in the creation of the peacock:

"and of the most amazing of birds in point of creation is the peacock, whom He designed in the firmest constitution and whose colors He arranged in the finest arrangement. …It is as though the amazing circles and suns formed on it were of pure gold and pieces of emerald. If you would liken it to what grows from the earth, you should say it is a bundle of flowers collected from the flowers of spring. And if you would liken it to apparel, it is like the brilliant and colorful fabrics or like the beautiful curtains from Yemen."

What makes the peacock even more amazing is that the peacock sheds its feathers periodically, like trees in autumn. Their feathers grow anew and mesh together, once again displaying their unique brilliance and beauty. The new feathers replacing the old ones exhibit the exact same color patterns. Such brilliant and beautiful design is beyond the comprehension of reason and the expression of language.

These are only a few of the infinite embodiments of natural beauty. Every day more natural mysteries are uncovered, inspiring us with awe and wonder. But, what is the purpose of all of this beauty and design inherent in the natural order? Are we justified in holding the view that there must be a designer, who has produced this beauty and design? The name that occurs to our minds, when we speak of the beauty and design that permeates the world is, God. He is the source from whom all beauty derives.

Discussion Activity

Try to envisage in your mind the beautiful and wonderful things in the world. Now, consider this question: What is the purpose for this universal beauty and design? Share your thoughts with your partners.

Think About

Any living creature you look at has a distinct lifestyle. Have you ever wondered how many different types of animals live in this world? How many years would it take to count all of them? If one day human beings were given the task to care for the animals and provide for their needs, how many experts and scientists would be required to manage the lives of all these animals? Considering this question, would it be reasonable if someone claimed that the wonderful and limitless diversity of life came into existence without any foreknowledge and merely as a result of the change collisions of particles? Is it not absurd to attribute to chance a magnificent order of life that thousands of intelligent human beings are incapable of replicating or even managing?

Case Study

Many natural scientists are devout believers in God. They proudly affirm their belief in God as the Wise Designer of the world. The religious fervor of some of these scientists is—according to their own claims—even more intense than many other believers. But there are also other scientists who, while refraining from openly avowing their belief in God, express their worldview in such terms as implies their monotheistic belief. It might not be an overstatement to claim that most scientists are believers, the materialists and atheists constituting the minority among them.

Newton, the famous scientist and celebrated discoverer of gravity, remarks:
"Studying the ear, we infer that its creator must have been aware of the physical laws governing sound. The creator of the eye must have known the sophisticated laws pertaining to light and the visual sense. Contemplating the celestial spheres, we infer the existence of the Magnificent Truth that governs them in accordance with a unique order."

"This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."

Albert Einstein:
"The human mind is not capable of grasping the Universe. We are like a little child entering a huge library. The walls are covered to the ceilings with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written these books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. But the child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books—a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects."

Sir Michael Faraday (1791-1867), founder of Electronics and Electro-magnetics said:
"The book of nature which we have to read is written by the finger of God."

William Thomson Kelvin, the famous mathematical physicist and the founder of Thermodynamics says:
"Overpoweringly strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie all around us; and if ever perplexities, whether metaphysical or scientific, turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force, showing to us through Nature the influence of a free will, and teaching us that all living things depend on one ever-acting Creator and Ruler." "We feel that the power of investigating the laws established by the Creator for maintaining the harmony and permanence of His works is the noblest privilege which He has granted to our intellectual state. As the depth of our insight into the wonderful works of God increases, the stronger are our feelings of awe and veneration in contemplating them and in endeavoring to approach their author."

"I have long felt that there was a general impression in the nonscientific world, that the scientific world believes Science has discovered ways of explaining all of the facts of Nature without adopting any definite belief in a Creator. I have never doubted that that impression was utterly groundless. Science can do little positively towards the objects of this society." "But it can do something, and that something is vital and fundamental. It is to show that what we see in the world of dead matter and of life around us is not a result of the fortuitous concourse of atoms."

Robert Boyle:
"All the loveliness imparted to the creature is lent it, to give us enlarged conceptions of that vast confluence and immensity that exuberates in God."

Key Terms

Materialism: The view that everything that actually exists is material (i.e., physical). This view leads to the denial of all immaterial realities, including God.

Discussion Activity

Define regulation in your own words. Share your definition with your friends.

Defining Design

Design contrasts with chaos, confusion, and random accumulation. Design describes a whole that is composed of qualitatively and quantitatively determined components, such that the components contribute collectively to achieving a common, determinate end.

DESIGN

Key Terms

Premise: An argument typically comprises two or more premises. It is by putting these premises together and reflecting on them in unison that the mind is able to reach a certain conclusion. Consider this example: (first premise) All human beings strive after perfection; (second premise) Ahmad is a human being; (conclusion) Ahmad strives after perfection.

The Argument from Design

The argument from design is an argument that invokes the immanent order in the world to demonstrate the existence of God. In this argument, when we speak of design and order, we intend teleological and purposive order. We perceive phenomena moving in an orderly fashion toward a fixed end. The phenomena themselves lack any form of intelligence or knowledge. There must, consequently, be a wise and intelligent being who guides phenomena in their movements toward their respective ends.

This argument consists of two premises, one of which is empirical and the other purely rational.

The first premise highlights the various observations conducted on the most sensitive and subtle questions in the different fields of empirical and natural sciences—which only corroborate the average person's perception of nature—and affirms that these observations clearly demonstrate the existence of an amazing and marvelous order in nature and the world. The tiny cells that make up our bodies, incorporating within themselves a mindboggling complexity of living material; the organs that are the larger constituents of our bodies (heart, brain, nervous system, circulatory system, etc.), exhibit a perfectly harmonious collaboration among themselves; the amazing adaptability of living creatures which enables them to adjust adequately to varying circumstances, which in certain cases leads to evolutionary mutations in a species; the astonishing variety of ecosystems that provide a matrix in which numerous life cycles can thrive; the incredible ability of the natural order of existence in providing for all the needs of the inhabiting creatures, from the tiniest organisms to the most complex ones, such as animals, trees,

and humans; the inconceivable vastness of the galaxies, comprised of enormous stars and planets. These examples demonstrate sufficiently the precision and purposive order that governs the world. As such a little reflection can enable us to comprehend the objective of beings, the tightly knit interconnection that links the reason for the vast multitude of creatures, and the all-encompassing motion that pervades everything, and thereby we may enjoy the beauty inherent in this world, which is like a ship sailing the seas, proceeding toward its ultimate destination. The second premise then goes on to reason that it is impossible that order and design—especially when manifested in highly complex systems of being—should come about without the agency of an intelligent and knowledgeable being. Juxtaposing these two premises, human reason concludes that the intricate and complex design of nature must have a wise designer.

Progress Tracking

When we say that the cosmos is purposeful, we mean that the cosmos pursues an objective that is determined by a set of universal laws which follows a general course. The laws that determine the purpose of things in the cosmos are all universal laws; they are not particular or individual so as to justify a discussion on the purpose of particular, individual beings.

Think about

The fact that unintelligent beings exhibit a discernible, purposive progress toward realizing their inherent objectives is clearly on display in the great array of phenomena that surround us. A common instance of this truth, which we tend to overlook, is the amazing concurrence between the birth of a baby and the emergence of milk in the mother's breast. It is true that this is a natural process, but this does not answer the question of how the mother's breast—an apparently inanimate and mindless organ—succeeds in detecting the newborn's need for food and how it manages to arrange the natural process in such a way as to provide the necessary nourishment for the infant at its birth, thus ensuring the survival of the species. This objective is one which can be accomplished only by an intelligent being, although this in no way is meant to deny that natural and instinctual processes are at work.

Discussion Activity

Try to explain to your partner(s) the purpose of creatures. Provide examples to illustrate your point.

Case Study

John Smith, an able and renowned architect and a strong believer in God, was given a project to construct a huge dam mainly to coordinate irrigation for farming. The supervisor of the project, Adam Carnegie, though a close friend of John, was an avowed atheist. And the two did occasionally engage in friendly quarrels over the subject of God. The plan John Smith offered for building the dam seemed very appropriate, and he competently implemented the plan, thus constructing a very admirable edifice. After the completion of the project, Adam wrote an email to John praising his expertise and competence and admiring the dam he succeeded in building. In reply, John quipped that his three-year-old daughter created the design of the dam. Adam, who was at a loss at reading this remark, wrote back that John must be kidding. And John, expecting to see this reply, retorted, "Yeah, I was just kidding. But if it is impossible to believe that a three-year-old is capable of designing a dam, how is it possible to believe that the intricate, universal order governing this world is the result of blind and random chance."

The Conclusion of the Argument from Design

In short, the conclusion that the argument from design yields is that there must be a wise and intelligent creator responsible for the creation and design of the orderly world that we inhabit. But as to what the characteristics of this creator are or whether there is only one creator or there are multiple creators, we must invoke other arguments and rational reasonings to find satisfactory answers to these further questions.

Biography

Abū Nasr Al-Fārābī: known in the West as Alpharabius (c. 872 -951) was a renowned scientist and philosopher of the Islamic Golden Age. He was also a cosmologist, logician, and musician. Al-Fārābī was dubbed the "second teacher" (al-mu'allim al-thāni), second, that is, only to Aristotle himself (Nasr (1985): 359-60).

The picture that emerges from the variety of al-Fārābī's writings is an impressive one. Al-Fārābī's logical and epistemological achievements, which have only recently come to light, have a very modern ring to them.

The linguistic sensitivity that al-Fārābī displays, his concern to communicate philosophy to a wide variety of audiences and his careful efforts to assimilate the Greek philosophical tradition into an Islamic context are all hallmarks of al-Fārābī's writings that help to explain the high esteem in which he was held by subsequent philosophers in the Islamic, Jewish, and to a lesser extent Christian traditions. We have seen the debt that Avicenna openly acknowledged to al-Fārābī in metaphysics; Averroes and his fellow Andalusian philosophers also held al-Fārābī up as a key authority, especially in logic, psychology and political philosophy.

Although al-Fārābī's writings were less extensively translated than those of Avicenna and Averroes, works like his Ihsā' al-'ulūm and Risālah fi'l-'aql were of central importance in the early transmission of Aristotelian thought, and gave the Christian thinkers their first glimpse of the wealth of new philosophical material that was to follow. (*History of Islamic Philosophy* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 2008)

A History of the Argument from Design

The first thinker to speak of a purpose and end for nature and the world was Aristotle. The first philosophical books in which the argument from design appears date back to ancient Greece. Plato's (427-347 BCE) *Timaeus* is an especially important work in this regard. In early medieval Europe, St. Augustine (354-430) was the most important philosopher to elaborate on this argument.

Averroes (Ibn Rushd), the renowned philosopher of Muslim Spain, was the first to translate Aristotle's works into Latin. He expanded on Aristotle's discussion of *telos* (purpose) in the world. Also, Abu Nasr al-Fārābī (870-950), one of the earliest Muslim philosophers who helped in large part to determine the direction Islamic philosophy was to take, created a large corpus of writing dedicated to the exposition of the works of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers and in this he succeeded in introducing Hellenic thought to a wide range of thinkers. He left behind many works that attest to his profound erudition and original thinking. Ibn Sina (980-1037), known as Avicenna in the Latin West, arguably the most famous Muslim philosopher, following in the footsteps of his predecessor al-Fārābī, made great accomplishments in commenting on and critiquing the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, enriching the philosophical tradition with his prolific and original way of thinking.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274), in the later part of the Middle Ages, discussed this argument extensively, incorporating it as the fifth of his "five ways." In recent history, one of the most popular elucidations of this argument is to be found in William Paley's (1743-1805) *Natural Theology*. Following Paley, Frederick Robert Tennant and Richard Swinburne are two of the more recent philosophers, who uphold the argument from design as a legitimate line of reasoning for proving that God exists. Finally, John Barrow and Frank Tipler offer a new articulation of this argument.

This was a very brief overview of the development of the argument from design in the Western world. Islamic theologians and philosophers have also shown a great deal of interest in this argument for the existence of God. A number of prominent Muslim theologians and philosophers who have given expression to this argument in the history of Islamic scholarship are Abū Yūsuf Kindi (801–873), Abū Bakr Bāqiliāni (the 11th century), Abū Hāmid (Muhammad) Ghazālī (1058–1111) , Fakhr Rāzī (1149-1209), Khājah Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī(1201-1274), Taftāzānī (1322-1390) and Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (the 17th century). Among contemporary Islamic scholars, Àyatullāh Mutahharī (1920-1979), Àyatullāh Subhānī (1930), and Àyatullāh Jawādī Àmulī (1933) may be mentioned for their thorough consideration of this argument, further developing the views of their predecessors.

Case Study

Stormy Seas

A cool and mild breeze rushed through Hasan's hair, caressing his face gently as he stood on the deck of the ship, ready to set sail. The sea birds, flying above, produced a keen yet enjoyable melody that increased the beauty of the scene.

The passengers and cargo safely aboard, the sails rushed open, giving the ship its starting push. Voyage on the sea, when the waters are calm and the sky sunny, can be very pleasing. Hasan tried to make the best of it. It was his first time on the sea. Staring down in the clean and transparent water, he could see the colorful fish swimming about and playing in their pools.

Hasan was not a religious man. A successful businessman, he was on vacation. Tired from the long days of work and the hustle and bustle of the business life, he was here to rest.

The gentle sun put him to a pleasant sleep. He couldn't tell how long he had slept when the violent shaking of the ship forced him awake. The first thing he caught sight of as he opened his eyes was a hellish lightening that pierced the dark of the sky. Thunder followed shortly.

His beautiful place of vacation had in a short span of time turned to a dark and tempestuous ocean that wildly cast the ship about. The massive waves drove madly at the ship, as though the sea was fighting mercilessly to devour its prey. A few hours ago, Hasan couldn't have imagined such a turn of events and such a swift change in the atmosphere. His hope for a pleasant vacation was utterly shattered, and now he was filled with absolute fear and despair.

The helplessness of his state was overwhelming. Girls and women screamed and wept. The men ran about wildly, trying to do whatever they could to increase the hope of their survival. But alas! Safety seemed a swiftly receding phantom that relinquished the passengers of the ship to the mercy of the turbulent sea. With the onrush of every wave, Hasan—who had by now retreated to the back of the deck where there were rails that he could grab on to, giving him a faint feeling of relative stability—felt the encompassing grip of death closing in on him.

Yet, when submerged in the deepest pits of despair, Hasan remembered his mother, Fatimah, whose prayers in times of distress were a sweet and enduring image in his mind. With this image, a warm and nourishing feeling suddenly filled his heart. The coldness of fear was now being counteracted by the warmth of hope in a savior, a powerful and transcendent God, whom he had long neglected.

It was amazing that though he had for so long considered himself an irreligious man, almost an atheist, he was now deriving comfort from the thought of God. In his heart, he turned to God, begging Him to spare their ship. He pleaded that if he was saved, he would certainly become a better man, a pious man, a kind and generous man. It was as though his essence was telling him that he could rely on God in the midst of the turmoil that engulfed him. He somehow knew that he could count on God. This trust was emerging from within him.

Hours later, the ship had sailed to safety. The passengers were exultant. There wasn't a better feeling in the world than that which they were experiencing in those moments of deliverance. Hasan, happy to have survived, was only thinking of leaving the ship.

Fitrah - Human Being's Divine Nature

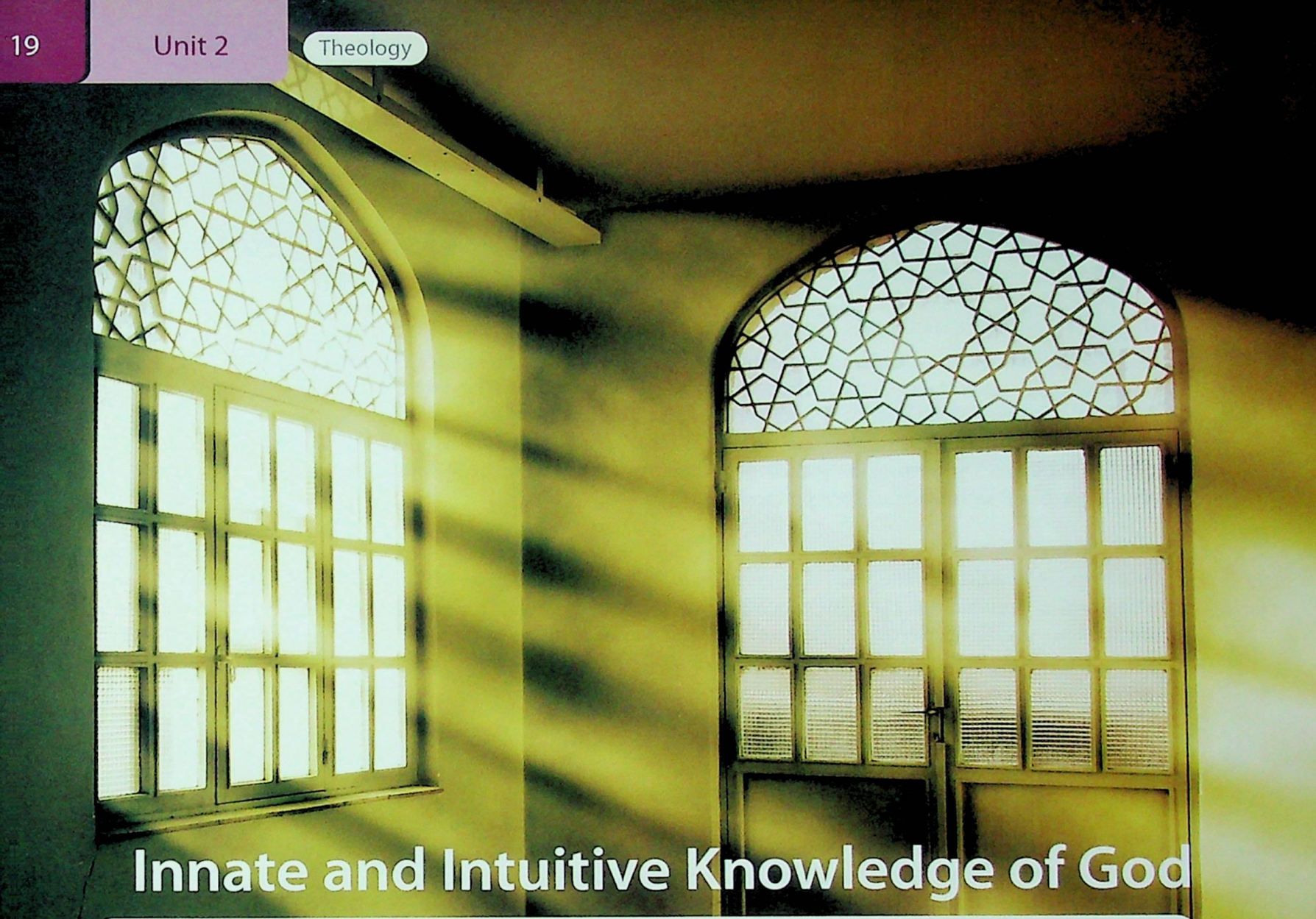
Fitrah refers to the distinctive spiritual capacity embedded by God in human creation that sets human beings apart from other animals and inclines them to seek perfection and virtue. All human beings possess this common human element, and so they are all predisposed to strive for perfection and truth. It is due to this inherent spiritual capacity that human beings sense intuitively a gravitation toward the true human perfections, for these human perfections are consistent with the needs and tendencies of the fitrah. Furthermore, as a result of this inherent spiritual component, the human being is predisposed to seek perfection. As God is Absolute Perfection and since through the fitrah the human being is subconsciously aware of the existence of Absolute Perfection, he is perpetually seeking the highest manifestation of perfection and the loftiest degree of existence. That is, prior to consciously apprehending and articulating arguments to prove God, the human being inherently intuits God's existence by virtue of his innate fitrah and is thus always seeking to find a way toward Him, to draw closer to Him.

Links

The innate spiritual inclinations, *fitriyyat* partake of six specific features, refer to Unit Three, page 86.

Progress Tracking

In a very fundamental way, all depression and anxiety is rooted in estrangement from Absolute Perfection. Human being's divine nature (*fitrah*) longs for absolute perfection and shuns deprivation and imperfection. Although human beings are innately inclined to seek perfection, we err in determining the objects that truly exemplify perfection. One may, for instance, fall in love with something or somebody, and this love provides a transitory illusion of satisfaction, but this satisfaction fades in time and that same sense of deprivation and depression returns, if one fails to make the connection with Absolute Perfection. In the inner depths of our existence, we long for the Absolute, we seek God, and the surrogate objects of love and satisfaction that we cherish can never provide a permanent replacement for the true object of our souls. But if we answer to the inner calling of our soul and strive toward the True Beloved, Who possesses all perfections and goods, our hearts shall be filled with hope, happiness, and serenity, and this is because the true inclinations of our souls are truly satisfied only in this way.



Innate and Intuitive Knowledge of God

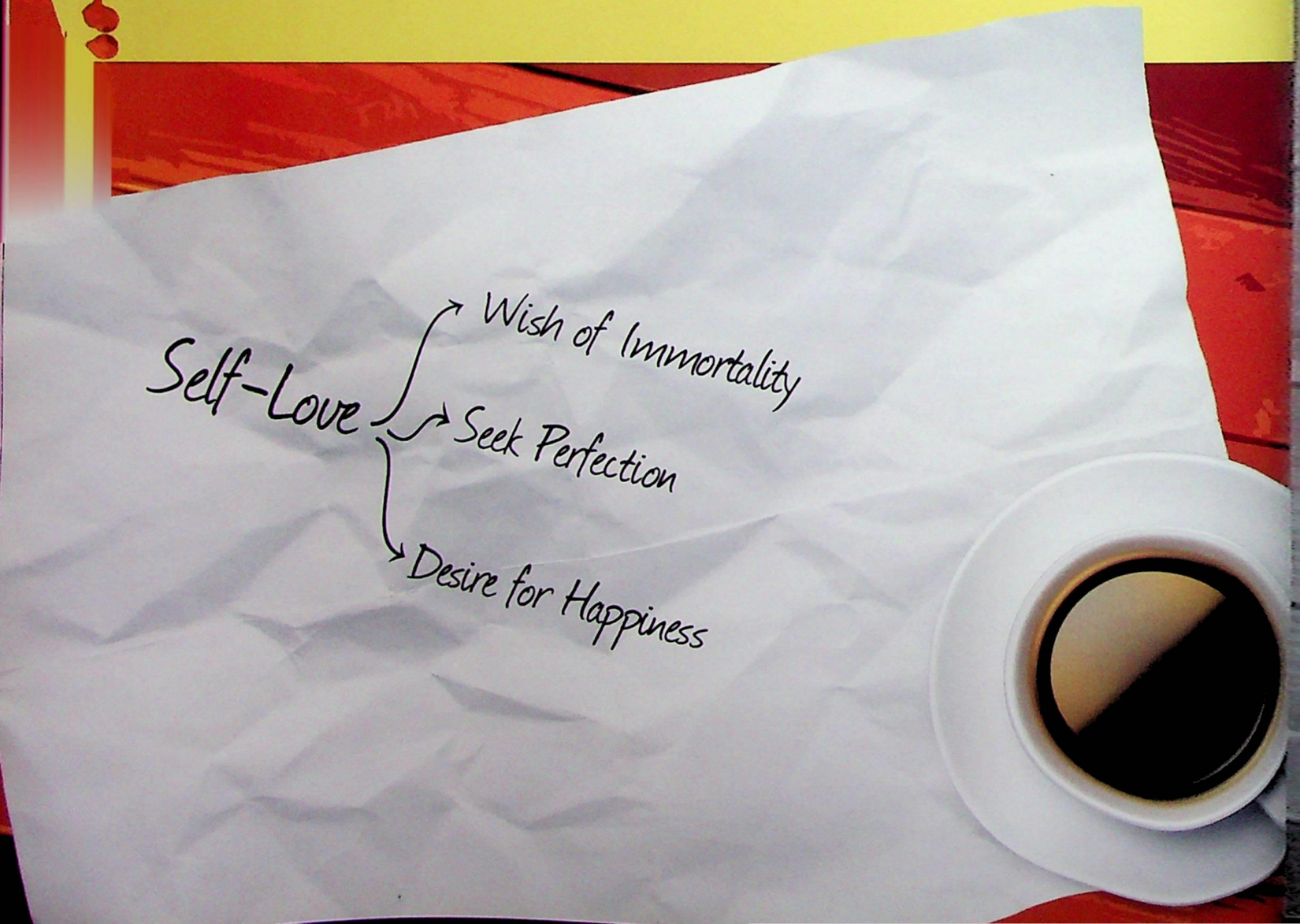
By virtue of their souls, human beings possess innate and intuitive knowledge of God. But as this statement seems contrary to common sense, it is necessary to offer a brief explanation to clarify it. There are two ways to acquire knowledge of objective reality: 1) Through the five external senses and 2) By directly and intuitively embracing the object of knowledge. Our comprehension of such feelings as love, hate, and fear is a clear instance of the type of knowledge that is direct and intuitive. The question that we should consider here is how we apprehend these feelings? How do we know that love, hatred, and fear exist within us? Do we need to formulate rational arguments to prove the existence of these feelings within us? Or is it that we merely intuit these feelings immediately? A newborn infant who suckles at his mother's breast knows that he is hungry and that his food is to be sought at his mother's breast. How does a newborn infant possess this knowledge? Has anyone taught the infant or has he engaged in a conscious process of rational reasoning that has led him to suckling? The infant like any other human being intuitively senses the feeling of hunger inspite of lacking any mental conception of it. Rational reasoning is useless in proving this feeling. The same truth holds in regard to other feelings such as love, hate and fear.

As explained in the above passage, all human beings have a similar intuitive sense of God: we all feel the innate gravitation toward Absolute Perfection and we are all inclined to seek It. This is what we intend when we say that knowledge of God is innate and intuitive. Within every human being there is an innate, albeit subconscious, feeling of dependence on a supreme being who is capable of fulfilling his needs. Although this feeling may be insufficient in enabling us to identify this being, the sensation of dependence is present within us. As such, saying that knowledge of God is intuitive means that we immediately sense a feeling of dependence on a supreme and absolute reality that transcends us.

Case Study

Āyatullah Misbāh Yazdī considers self-love to be the root of the human being's three principal inclinations, which are: 1) the wish for immortality 2) the inclination to seek perfection and 3) the desire for happiness. He maintains that these three human inclinations all stem from the basic inclination of self-love. We love ourselves, and so we wish to live perpetually, to perfect ourselves, and to achieve happiness. Of course, human beings disagree as to what constitutes perfection. Some seek perfection in spirituality, some in knowledge and others in wealth. Yet what they all share is the basic inclination to seek perfection.

Many of the inclinations enumerated here are actually offshoots of the basic inclination of self-love. Now, one may ask whether it is possible that the human being could act without being in anyway motivated by the inclination of self-love. Some mystics claim that in the most intense cases of love, when the lover is said to be totally immersed in the beloved, the lover is no longer acting under the impulse of self-love but is rather motivated purely by the love of the beloved.



Properties of the Fitriyyat - Divine Inclinations and Intuitions

Human nature recognises God and understands its dependence on its creator. Due to the recognition of God by human nature it possesses various tendencies, which (in opposition to instinctive tendencies that only call a person toward meeting material needs) lead man towards spiritual perfection.

The natural tendencies have unique characteristics, some of which are referenced below:

1. Divine inclinations and intuitions are beyond the animal nature. When we speak of *fitriyyat*, we generally intend those innate qualities that are specific to the human being. On the other hand, those innate qualities that human beings and animals share in common are usually designated as *qarā'iz* , instincts.

2. Fitriyyat are innate and inborn. The human being possesses them by nature and without having to acquire them. As such, external elements and factors are irrelevant to the existence or nonexistence of the fitriyyat, though they may influence how the fitriyyat develops. External factors can promote or hamper the proper development of the fitriyyat.

3. Fitriyyat are common to all human beings without exception, for they are embedded in human nature. As such, they transcend all limitations of time and place and all other circumstances.

This does not, of course, mean that divine inclinations and intuitions are always in a state of conscious activity. It is often the case that human beings are incognizant of their fitriyyat, and due to this incognizance they may even deny that they possess such inclinations and intuitions. But no matter how inactive the fitriyyat may be or how deep they may be buried in the unconscious depths of the soul, they are nevertheless present.

4. Fitriyyat can be uncovered through introspection and inner experience. That is, by reflecting inward we may discover the innate inclinations and intuitions that are embedded in our divinely endowed nature. As such, one of the ways whereby we may find out whether the human being is by nature inclined to honesty and truthfulness is to contemplate our own conscience. By reflecting introspectively, we realize that our souls are created in such a way that we naturally favor honesty and abhor dishonesty.

5. The dictates of fitriyyat are self-evident truths. The human being is created in such a way that he grasps by nature the self-evident truths without needing to verify them by recourse to reasoning. As such, there is always universal consensus regarding that which is self-evident. Of course, it is possible that some people may occasionally doubt certain self-evident truths or deny their own innate inclinations and intuitions, but this is only an occasional anomaly resulting from a confusion or lack of awareness. It is, however, important to note that though the dictates of fitriyyat are self-evident, there may be questions and uncertainties about them that need answers: self-evidence does not imply clarity and certainty in all respects.

Links

To learn more about instincts, refer to the section "General Guidance" of Unit Four.

Think About

There are extremely skeptical individuals who doubt not just the fitriyyat but their own existence and that of the world. Such individuals tend to deny all propositions that are regarded by most people as self-evident. They can be so adamantly opposed to the truth that if you tell them, "You speak with the aid of your tongue," they might reply, "What tongue? Am I really speaking or is this just a delusion?" This is, in fact, a psychological disorder that bars those affected from accepting even the most self-evident of truths.

6. Fitriyyat are, without exception, good. There is no divine inclination or intuition that may be characterized as evil. Evils do not stem from fitriyyat. Though evil conduct is ubiquitous and affects all humankind, it does not derive from the fitriyyat. The clearest proof for this is that even the most unjust and oppressive of people are inclined to speak of justice and wish to be seen by people as just individuals. When a group of thieves work in collaboration, they seek to divide the spoils fairly. It is possible that the human being's fitrah may be substantially weakened and driven into a state of dormancy by engaging in evil conduct; yet, his fitrah is still present, though in a subdued state. Human being's divine nature can never be totally extinguished and therefore even in the most wicked of people it sometimes comes to the surface and shows itself.

One may object that the human being's inclination toward evil outweighs the effect of the fitriyyat. Since our birth, we have an instinctive attraction toward evil. Islam refers to this inborn attraction as al-nafs al-ammārah bi-ssū' —"the evil-prompting soul." Now, considering that we have this inborn attraction to what is evil, how can we hope to act in accordance with the dictates of our divine nature? The answer is that neither the evil-prompting soul nor the divine nature are strong enough to deprive the human agent of free will. So, just as the evil soul prompts us to commit vile actions, the divine nature reminds us of our true selves and beckons us to do good and be virtuous. It is, thus, the human will that must choose between these two opposing drives.

7. One last point is that certain fitriyyat are normally inactive, being actualized only under certain circumstances. The intuition of God, for instance, is one of the loftier fitriyyat that can be realized only if we succeed in severing our attachment to the world. The same holds true of certain instincts. The sexual drive, for instance, comes into a play only after a certain age is reached; prior to that, it is dormant and in a state of potentiality.

Examiner's Tip

You are expected to provide clear examples of innate human inclinations and intuitions (fitriyyat), support your examples with sufficient reasoning as to their innateness.

Activity

Give two examples of instincts and two examples of the innate human inclinations and intuitions (fitriyyat). Explain what distinguishes the two groups in a short essay of 200-300 words.

Classification of Fitriyyat

Fitriyyat may be classified in various ways. An important classification is that which distinguishes between inclinations (conative fitriyyat) and intuitions (cognitive fitriyyat). Innate intuitions furnish knowledge and understanding, whereas innate inclinations propel the human being to action. One innate intuition is the intuition of God, the innate knowledge of God that human beings possess in their very nature. An innate inclination is the inclination to seek God.

Reference

If you would like to know more about the different aspects of the human soul, you can read Chapter Four of Ayatullah Amini's *Self-Building*. You can read the book on-line at www.pureislam.org

Innate Inclinations

The innate inclinations the human being is possessed of may be divided into two categories: animal inclinations and human inclinations. Animal inclinations are those which human beings and animals share in common. They are commonly referred to as instincts (qarā'iz). Two prominent examples are (1) self-preservation, which disposes animals to act in ways that ensure their survival (the drives to seek food and to repel enemies stem from this inclination) and (2) sexual desire.

Human inclinations are those which are specific to human nature and are not found in animals. They may be distinguished by the fact that they do not usually correspond to a body part. Examples of this category are the inclinations toward truth, virtue, beauty, creativity, immortality, and perfection.

Conative Fitriyyat

Conative fitriyyat include the following instances:

- Inclination towards immortality
- Inclination to seek the truth
- Inclination towards virtue and righteous deeds
- Inclination towards perfection and the perfect being
- Inclination towards felicity
- Inclination towards beauty, whether it is manifested in such physical phenomena as flowers and mountains or in aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual truths;
- Inclination towards creativity;
- Inclination towards adoration of the sublime

Case Study

What Scholars Have to Say Concerning Fitrah

It would be absurd to expect psychologists to fully endorse the concept of fitrah. For, on the one hand, psychological studies and experiments are generally focused on empirical and sensory data, whereas fitrah is an entirely spiritual and immaterial reality. And, on the other hand, many of the fitriyyat, as has already been pointed out, remain dormant and in a state of potentiality until the appropriate circumstances for their emergence present themselves. As such, it is difficult for psychologists to detect the physical and behavioral effects of these dormant inclinations and intuitions. Nevertheless, one can occasionally find intimations of the concept of fitrah in the works of psychologists.

Paul Edwards (1923-2004), the renowned moral philosopher, describes what prominent psychologists and philosophers think in relation to God being essential to human nature, as follows:

There are philosophers and psychologists of influence who either do not believe in God at all or who, at any rate, do not favor the enterprise of buttressing belief in God by means of "proofs" but are nevertheless concerned to maintain that human beings are by nature religious—that they are, in Max Scheler's phrase, "God-seekers." They would point out that it is this question of "philosophical anthropology," and not any question about the validity of the Common Consent Argument, which is of real interest and human importance. Though perhaps invalid as a proof of the existence of God, the Common Consent Argument does embody an important insight about the nature of man.

These writers are a great deal more sophisticated than most of the traditional defenders of the argument, whose views we considered in preceding sections. They do not at all deny that, in the most obvious sense, the world is full of unbelievers, but they would add that a great many of these unbelievers feel a strong urge to worship something or somebody and therefore invent all kinds of surrogate deities. Man's "gods and demons," writes Carl Jung, "have not disappeared at all; they have merely got new names." Those, in the words of Miguel de Unamuno, "who do not believe in God or who believe that they do not believe in Him, believe nevertheless in some little pocket god or even devil of their own." Max Scheler writes , "Religious agnosticism is not a psychological fact, but a self-deception … it is an essential law … that every finite spirit believes either in God or in an idol. These idols may vary greatly. So-called unbelievers may treat the state or a woman or art or knowledge or any number of other things as if they were God." Scheler adds that what needs explanation is not belief in God, which is original and natural, but unbelief or, rather, belief in an idol. The situation is not infrequently compared with the sexual instinct and what we know about the consequences of its suppression. If the sexual instinct does not find natural gratification, it does not cease to be operative but becomes diverted into other and less wholesome channels. The worship of institutions and human deities is said to be a similarly pathological phenomenon. (*Common Consent Arguments for the Existence of God*, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 1)

Factors Responsible for Estrangement from Fitrah

The idea that the human being partakes of a divine nature that has innate knowledge of God is sometimes criticized on the grounds that if in fact such a nature does exist, why then is human history full of atheists and unbelievers. Our reply to this criticism is that there are numerous factors that may work against and counteract the influence of the fitrah. Indulging the sensual desires and succumbing to evil social conditions are two main factors that can estrange one from one's divine nature—fitrah—and diminish one's response to its intuitive directions. Here we will consider five such factors.

Progress Tracking

The divine nature within the human being remains throughout one's life as the incorruptible force of truth, never deviating from its sacred function, which is to compel one to strive after truth and perfection. Nevertheless, the human being may choose to neglect and defy the fitrah. Even such an infamous figure as Pharaoh was endowed with this divine nature, but he in virtue of his free will chose to go against the guidance of the fitrah. That Moses was commanded by God to approach Pharaoh to try to convince him to obey God shows that Pharaoh did partake of divine nature, for otherwise this command to Moses would have been pointless.

1 Flawed Presentation of Religious Concepts

An important factor contributing to the stifling of human fitrah is the unreasonable and insensible picture in which it is sometimes cast. The irrational and anti-science presentation that some religious authorities tend to give of God and His Attributes creates in many people a conflict between their inclination toward religion and the other fitriyyat, on the one hand, and their instincts, on the other. It is as though if they choose religion, they must do so at the expense of many of their natural needs. This inner conflict results from a misrepresentation of religion is the reason why many people chose to subdue their divine nature. When religion is defined as contradicting and conflicting with science, when superstitions are inserted into religion, when deplorable and unethical acts are justified in the name of religion, it is only natural that people would espouse a negative attitude toward it and would lose faith in it, and this in turn would entail their estrangement from their divine nature. Here are some instances of how religion and religious concepts are misrepresented:

1) Some theologians offer a corporeal depiction of God, going so far as to say that the distance between God's eyes is approximately 21,000 miles.

2) Many religious scholars and thinkers from different religions tend to define the role of God in the world as a mysterious agent that is at work alongside the natural causes and effects, which is incorrect, as God's agency and activity transcends the natural causes, and it is wrong to reserve it only for those instances where scientists have failed to offer a convincing theory concerning a phenomenon;

3) Some religions and religious tendencies characterize spiritual perfection as the utter renunciation of the pleasures of the flesh, thus denouncing the institution of marriage as an evil necessity and exalting the practice of celibacy and monasticism as most conducive to spiritual realization;

4) It is very common that adults in their innocent attempt to educate their children concerning religious concepts and especially God feed them wrong and warped beliefs, and when children grow up they realize the futility of these concepts, drawing the conclusion that religion must be flawed, whereas what is flawed is the conception of religion they received from their parents, and not religion itself.

These are only a few examples of how people are discouraged from religion and thereby alienated from their divine nature.

2 Ignorance

Lack of self-knowledge and awareness of one's spiritual dimensions and existential limitations leads the human being to see himself as no more than an animal whose nature encompasses only animal instincts. Jaundiced by such a misconception of his own nature, the human being has a tendency to view himself as the supreme animal and therefore the center of the universe and as such justified in manipulating nature and all other beings to gratify his own brute desires. Ignorance concerning oneself and one's true nature entails an outright denial of God or a polytheistic worldview. Thus, ignorance concerning oneself and God is a central cause resulting in the disorientation of the divine nature in the human being.

Another way in which ignorance impairs the efficacy of the divine nature in man is when one lacks a correct understanding of religion and religious concepts. This in turn begets doubt, and doubt concerning religion precludes one from heeding one's divine nature. Holding wrong views concerning the place of the human being in the cosmic scheme and the role of God leads to certain misunderstandings, such as the misconception that religious doctrines are contrary to reason, the false impression that the theory of evolution (assuming it is scientifically established) is opposed to a theistic view of the world and the delusion that belief in Divine Decree is incompatible with human free will.

Of course ignorance concerning religion can be traced to a number of factors. One prominent factor concerns the society in which one lives. People who live in societies dominated by false beliefs and are thus subjected to an incessant onslaught of misinformation in line with the policies of the powers controlling these societies are prone to develop wrong beliefs that estrange them from their divine nature. Another major factor responsible for ignorance concerning religion is overindulgence in sensual pleasures and pursuing perverted desires.

3 Indulging the Base Desires

It is a matter of fact that undue obsession with base pleasures impedes the pursuit of truth. Overindulgence of base pleasures can go so far in corrupting human nature as to lead one to take the pleasures as false gods instead of the True God, heeding only their impulses. The libertine and licentious man is prone to relinquish any claim to dignity, nobility, and bravery only because he is enthralled to lust, and therefore the spiritual impulses no longer hold sway over him. Should one choose to pursue a life of license and pleasure, in effect becoming enthralled to libido, one's frame of mind and thought would change to accommodate this lifestyle. The lofty ideas and impulses that are initially a potent force in one's character — the innate acquaintance with God and the tendency to worship and love Him —gradually give way to base, materialistic thoughts, and one over time adopts the mindset that the world is arbitrary and is devoid of purpose, that reckoning in the Hereafter is only a religious superstition, and that we should enjoy the present. That is, ideological and moral materialism are correlative and reinforce one another. Just as espousing materialism as an ideology entails a licentious life, so too leading a life devoted to sensual pleasures alters one's mindset, making it more difficult for one to comprehend and accept spiritual and religious truths. The people of Sodom where Lot dwelt, for instance, became so depraved that they not only rejected belief in God but also renounced the most basic human virtues and threatened to expel Lot if he did not submit to their vicious beliefs.

Discussion Activity

Name some of the evil factors that can influence the fitrah adversely, impairing human dignity and nobility and impeding spiritual advancement. Why, in your opinion, are most people strongly inclined to retain and defend their dignity? Share your thoughts with your discussion partners.

4

Conceit and Arrogance

Arrogance and egocentrism have the potential to blot out the divine nature in the human being to such an extent that he would be willing to oppose the truth knowingly and deliberately. We may, for instance, refuse to acknowledge the truth in spite of knowing that it is the truth on account of our arrogance. Or when debating an issue with someone, our egocentrism may lead us to denounce and belittle our opponent and claim our position to be superior knowing that he is voicing the correct position. As such, arrogance and egocentrism are moral vices that can cause one to become oblivious to the light of guidance emanating from our divine nature.

Pillars of Wisdom

Stressing the importance of following the truth, Imam ʻAlī ibn Abī Tālib states, "Heed the words you hear rather than the person who utters them." (*Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-kalim*, p. 361)

5

Blind Devotion to Sensory and Empirical Science

Empiricists maintain that the world is confined to the physical and sensible. Citing the advances of empirical science as a vindication of their position, they arrogantly deny the truth and validity of anything that lies beyond the scope of empirical investigation. Blinded by this scientistic hubris, they vehemently reject the existence of fitrah. But it is important to note that not all scientists entertain such blind scientism. There are many scientists who, citing the amazing design and order in the world, affirm that there must be an intelligent, supernatural agent at work, just as the design in a human invention or artistic work points to the existence of an intelligent creator.

Heeding One's Divine Nature

Have you ever been in a situation where you lose hope in everything and everybody? Imagine yourself stranded on the high seas in a ship that is about to drown. You know there is no one around you to hear your calls for help. Your electronic communication devices are all broken. How would you feel in such a situation? Would you, lost in utter despair, surrender yourself to death or would you instead invoke the infinite power and mercy of God?

When on the brink of a devastating calamity, from which no human or natural cause could extricate him, the human being often experiences a peculiar source of hope glimmering within his heart. In the moment of utter despair when there is no longer any hope in natural causes, the human being impulsively turns to a higher power that can save him. This intuitive and impulsive inclination to beseech a supreme savior is for the existence of God.

Proving God's Existence by Recourse to Fitrah

As explained previously, the human being is endowed with a divine and spiritual nature that intuitively grasps his dependence on God without having to formulate rational reasoning. It is possible and intellectually tenable to appeal to this profound and inherent acquaintance with God to prove His existence. In other words, we can employ this intuitive knowledge to formulate a philosophically fruitful argument for God's existence. Western and Eastern philosophers alike have invoked the human being's divine nature (fitrah) in proving God's existence. They have diverged, of course, in the precise formulation of their arguments. Yet, the main substance of these arguments is the same as they all cite humankind's nature and innate inclinations.

Divine Nature Argument

One of the important arguments presented by Muslim theologians and philosophers is the argument from divine nature. Several different versions of this argument have been articulated. Here we will consider only one articulation.

There is a clear and discernible inclination embedded in human nature toward infinite existence and absolute perfection. All human beings partake of an innate tendency to seek a superior being and to draw near to it so as to better fulfill their inward and outward needs and to be able to successfully stave off all the threats and dangers they may encounter. As such, the human being is innately inclined to adore and worship such a superior being. This superior being we call God. And God must of necessity exist, for if God lacks an objective reality, the innate human inclination is rendered futile.

In other words, human beings possess an innate inclination toward God. Innate inclinations must of necessity have a corresponding objective reality (just as the eye requires that there be light in the world and the ear presupposes the existence of sound). Therefore, there must be a corresponding objective reality that is the object of the innate inclination toward God.

Human inclinations invariably presupposes two sides, both of which must enjoy objective reality: the inclined subject and the object toward which the inclination is directed. Without these two sides, there can be no inclination. In other words, human inclination is a correlation, requiring two sides in order to come about. All correlations in fact presuppose two objective sides. The father-son relationship, for instance, is a correlation, and therefore it cannot be without either father or son. The term son is meaningless unless a correlative father is presupposed. In a correlation, therefore, if one side is objective, its correlative must also be objective.

The same truth holds in relation to human inclinations. Where there is a genuine and objective human inclination, there must be a corresponding object that is also real. This applies not only to the loftier inclinations but also to the animal instincts. The feeling of hunger indicates that there must be corresponding reality that satisfies this urge, that reality being food. When one experiences the feeling of love and passion, there must be an objective correlative that can satisfy this feeling. The precise nature of that correlative is irrelevant; what we mean is that there must be a correlative for this feeling in objective reality.

It is the same truth that we intend when speaking of the God-seeking inclination in human nature. Since the human being partakes of a natural inclination toward God and since inclinations are correlational, there must be a corresponding objective reality that answers to this innate inclination. In short, the innate inclination and God are correlatives: The innate inclination is real; therefore, God must also be real.

Think About

Did you know that one of the main objectives of scientists of ancient and medieval times was to discover the "elixir of life"? They assumed that there was such a substance and that if consumed it could make one immortal. Now, in the process of searching for the elixir, scientists discovered many other elements and chemical substances, and so their investigations were not utterly futile. But the point is that this shows that the drive to seek immortality has been with humankind from very early on. This shows that the yearning for immortality is an innate human inclination.

Progress Tracking

Innate human inclinations are actually indicative of inherent human needs. The urge to seek food, for instance, shows that the human being needs nourishment to sustain his life. By the same token, the human being's innate inclination toward God points to his need to overcome his inherent deficiencies and defects by drawing ever closer to and imitating God's Absolute Perfection. Of course, the deficiencies and defects that people wish to overcome differ based on their diverging perspectives. Some primarily seek material advancement and wealth, invoking God when some financial woe befalls them. But those who enjoy a greater degree of understanding, being perpetually aware of their own inherent deficiencies and God's essential and absolute perfection, realize that they are in need of God for all their deficiencies and defects and privations, whether material or spiritual. As a result, they are always cognizant of their inherent need for God.

Divine Nature Argument for the Existence of God as Viewed by Christian Thinkers

Thomas Aquinas remarks that the natural human inclination toward happiness is a way to God.

Réginald Marie Garrigou-Lagrange, arguably the greatest Catholic Thomist of the 20th century, and have propounded the idea that the natural inclination in the human being to seek happiness and felicity r cited as grounds for arriving at a new argument for the existence of God. Such an argument would run alo following lines. Every human being by nature seeks felicity and happiness. This natural inclination car fully satisfied by the finite sources of happiness—whether viewed individually or collectively—that are av in the material world. There must, therefore, be a greater and immaterial source of happiness.

Conclusion

Based on the theory that there is a common nature that all human beings share are certain innate inclinations and intuitions that people of all times and cu partake of. These inclinations and intuitions may be highlighted as follows:

- Human beings are innately aware of God, God-loving, God-worshippin God-seeking, albeit subconsciously.
- Our ultimate beloved and final purpose is God; there is no substitute th fully satiate this subconscious passion for God. It is only with God that the being can achieve enduring peace and serenity.
- The human being is by nature a monotheist: His very nature de polytheism.
- Human beings are incessantly seeking God without knowing it. Th intuitively drawn to the truth, the just, the beautiful, and the perfect. captivated by beauty and perfection in whatever form it may appear. We resp praise virtue on account of the innate inclination within our nature.
- Knowledge of God is embedded in the fabric of our very nature. intuitively aware of God in the depths of our souls. As such, unbelief, agnos atheism, and any other form of doubt in God are symptomatic of the corrupt deviation of human nature.

Cosmological Argument | *Burhān al-Imkān wa al-Wujūb*

rogress Tracking

n our daily life and routine activities, we often engage in reasoning without being fully aware hat we are formulating syllogistic arguments. Usually an argument is made up of a number of premises and a conclusion that follows from those premises. Catching sight of a bird, we may reason, "This bird is a type of swallow. Swallows are migratory. Therefore, this bird is migratory." The first two sentences are the premises, and the third is the conclusion. So when we speak of premises, we mean the phrases in an argument that are expressed to reach a conclusion based on them.

The cosmological argument, as it is expressed by Muslim philosophers, is a purely rational argument. That is, all its premises are a priori and need not be verified by human experience. The cosmological argument differs from other arguments for the existence of God in a number of ways, but the following two distinctions are of paramount importance.

- To prove the existence of God using this argument, there is no need to rely on sensory and empirical data.
- All the Divine Attributes can be deduced and rationally proven by recourse to this argument.

ctivity

Show that you have adequately understood the concepts of necessity and contingency by providing examples other than the ones mentioned in the text that demonstrate these two concepts.

Preliminary Introduction

Consider a sweetened cup of tea. Sugar and sweetened tea may both be described by the adjective sweet. There is, however, a fundamental different between the sweetness of sugar and the sweetness of tea. We eliminate the sweetness of tea, and we will still have tea. Bitter tea is tea, not some other essence. But is sugar still sugar if we deprive it of sweetness? Sugar minus sweetness is not sugar.

Having this example in mind, let us now define the terms necessary (al-wājib) and contingent (al-mumkin). When we analyze the relationship between a being and existence, the association is either necessary or contingent.

If the connection between a being and existence is necessary, that being must necessarily exist; it is impossible that it should not exist. Such a being is termed a necessary being (wājib al-wujūd). Just as the link between sweetness and sugar is an established one, so too the relationship between a necessary being and existence is fundamental. A necessary being evidently exists; the possibility of its nonexistence is illogical.

A contingent being, on the other hand, is one whose relationship to existence is dependent rather than necessary. Just as the relation between tea and sweetness is contingent (tea may or may not be sweet), so too the relation between a contingent being and existence is a subjective one: a contingent being may or may not exist.

Now that we have examined and understood the meaning of the two concepts, let us consider the relationship between necessary and contingent beings. For a better understanding of this affiliation, let us consider the following example may help. When fire destroys a house, certain officers are appointed to investigate the

Progress Tracking

The phenomena surrounding us are all in need of a cause. Without a cause, they would not exist. To say that phenomena can come into existence without a cause would imply that phenomena could come into existence without requiring any conditions: Anything could happen anytime, anywhere. If the principle of causality were false, we should have been able to light a fire in the midst of water, breathe water, or jump to the moon. Without the law of causality, nothing required a cause; anything would be possible.

cause of the fire. What is obvious is that it is impossible that fire should come about without a cause. The fire is caused either by natural factors or it is caused by people. This example shows how all people presuppose a very basic and general principle, which is that for something to come into existence or to change from one form to another there needs to be an agent to actualize the existence or change.

Picture a red apple in your mind. If it were not for you or your mental activity, would this picture exist? Without a doubt, the mental image of the red apple is dependent on you in order to come into and remain in existence. You are the cause of its presence.

The relationship between necessary and contingent beings is similar. The Necessary Being is the existential cause of all contingent beings. Without the Necessary Being, no contingent being could exist. For, as explained above, the connection between a Necessary Being and existence is a fundamental relationship (such as the link between sugar and sweetness), which means that the Necessary Being must exist and it is impossible for it not to exist. On the other hand, the relationship between contingent beings and existence is dependent; that is, they may or may not exist, and in order to be extant, there must be a cause that would actualize their reality. This cause is the Necessary Being, which in religious parlance is known as God.

Therefore, as everything in the world is contingent, and contingent beings need to rely on a necessary being, God is the Self-Sufficient Creator of the world Who bestows existence on all other beings. Now, we can adequately understand why God is self-sufficient. If He was in need of something, the existence of some cause that would fulfill God's need would be necessary. That would mean that God is in need of a cause, whereas it is impossible for a necessary being to depend on another being.

Case Study

Watch

Have you ever taken a close look at the parts of a watch—the springs, wheels, and pinions? A single watch may contain tens of wheels and pinions and other related parts. The movement of each of these parts occasions the movement of an attached part. The first wheel moves the second wheel, which in turn moves the third wheel, and so on. If you follow the pattern of the parts, you can find the mainspring, which is the prime mover in the watch. The movement of the mainspring does not depend on any other part in the watch.

Now, imagine that a watch contained an infinite number of wheels, all of which were attached to one another but without ending with a mainspring. Obviously, such a picture is absurd. It is impossible to have an infinity of wheels that lack a first mainspring to move them. This simple example demonstrates the impossibility of what philosophers term infinite regress and which they deem to be rationally absurd.

Infinite regress is the term employed to suggest an unending series of causes and effects that fails to lead back to a final cause whereat the series terminates and the chain of causal agency begins. It is an utterly absurd scenario. There cannot be a vast number of effects that lack a first cause. Effects, no matter how numerous they may be, must go back to a first cause.

Running Match

Imagine that you were called on to participate in a running match that had a grand prize that would entice even the frailest of people to try their fortune. Yet, to participate you must meet one bizarre condition: To start the race, you must wait for the other runner to start, and he must also wait for you to start running. Each of the two contestants can start running only after the other one starts. Obviously, the race would never take place and the two runners would never start running.

In philosophical language, this situation is called a vicious circle. A vicious circle, indicates a scenario where one thing depends, with one or more mediums, on itself. Phenomenon A depends on Phenomenon B, which depends on Phenomenon C, which in turn depends on Phenomenon A: This is a circular chain of dependency and is, therefore, impossible. The reason why this circular chain is impossible is that A is concurrently the cause and effect of C.

Articulating the Cosmological Argument

We know for a fact that we exist and that there are other beings besides us that also exist. We also know that we and all the other beings we perceive about us are contingent beings. The existence of contingent beings presupposes the existence of a necessary being. For, on the one hand, it is absurd to assume that contingent beings have caused themselves, as that would constitute a vicious circle, just as it is absurd to assume that they exist without a cause, as that would imply infinite regress. Since both circular causality and infinite regress have been proven as impossible, we may conclude that there must be a necessary cause from which all other causes and effects—the entirety of contingent beings—derive.

Monotheistic faith identifies one necessary being as the ultimate cause of the entire world, which in religious parlance is called God. God is the self-sufficient, independent, self-existent being who brings all else into existence.

Divine Attributes

Discussion Activity

Before reading this unit, make a list of those attributes of God that you know. Discuss them with your partners and, working together, classify these attributes in whatever way seems appropriate to you. After studying this unit, review your list and classification of God's attributes and determine how they fit into what you have learned here.

In the previous unit we studied the reasoning for proving that there is a wise, intelligent, and powerful creator responsible for the creation of human beings as well as the entire world. The name we commonly ascribe to the creator is "God." Now that we have ascertained the existence of God, the next step is to grasp a better understanding of God. We may, therefore, ask, "What are the attributes of God?" But before that we must answer a more fundamental question: Is it even possible to know God?

The topic of God's attributes occupies a prominent place in all religions. Most religions presuppose God's existence, and as such they concern themselves exclusively with propounding God's attributes. Most theologians interpret this treatment of God's attributes as indicating that they are comprehensible to human reason. Of course, this does not mean that all people enjoy the same level of comprehension in understanding them.

Progress Tracking

As the Cosmological Argument adequately demonstrates, the relation between a necessary being and existence is necessary. This implies that a necessary being must possess all perfections and all positive existential properties. As such, a necessary being cannot be in need of anything or anyone, for the necessary being is the cause on which all else depends for existence, and if it were in need of anything, it could not be the necessary being but would rank with the contingent beings. Thus, the necessary being is self-sufficient and absolutely perfect.

The Way to Know God's Attributes

Religions ascribe a multiplicity of names and attributes to God, often furnishing rational arguments in support of these names and attributes. Philosophers and theologians tend to take the necessary being as the primary attribute of God and by analyzing it arrive at a number of other Divine Attributes.

Furthermore, should we succeed in demonstrating that God is Absolutely Perfect, we would be warranted in ascribing to Him all attributes of perfection—such as knowledge and power—in an infinite and absolute capacity.

Lastly, another way to arrive at God's attributes is induction. By studying the perfection of creatures, we conclude that the Creator must of necessity possess those perfections, although to an infinitely greater extent. Of course, the inductive way for gaining knowledge of the Divine Attributes requires special caution and care. Although we judge that God must possess the perfections He imparts to the creatures, we also know that He is incorporeal and infinite. He is not bound by the limitations of the creatures. As such, before ascribing to God the attributes we arrive at inductively, we must negate of them all of their negative connotations pertaining to the finite and deficient creatures of the material world. This is a very delicate task, as we are accustomed to the privations and deficiencies of the material world in which we have been brought up, and so it could be very difficult to wean our minds from them.

Progress Tracking

It is a general philosophical principle that in order to impart something, one must first be in possession of it. To bestow something to another implies that one possesses that which one bestows. Based on this general principle, God must possess all those perfections that He bestows onto His creatures, albeit at an infinitely higher degree.

The beings we are associated with are material and thus bound by the limitations of the material world. Material beings are confined to a certain time and place and partake of a specific shape with particular dimensions. As such, our minds generally think in the context of time and space. Now, to free our minds from this context so as to conceive God, Who transcends time and space and the world of finite existence, requires special care and diligent mental effort.

Now that we have learned the different approaches to examining God's Attributes, one may ask what is the most concise form in which God's attributes may be expressed. The answer consists of the following two sentences:

1. God possesses all perfections infinitely;
2. God's existence is free of any and all imperfections.

Discussion Activity

Before moving on to the next unit, discuss with your discussion partners what attributes may be ascribed to God and what attributes must be negated of Him. Explain your reasons for the attributes that fall under each set.

Attributes of Beauty, Attributes of Majesty

Islamic theology divides the Divine Attributes into two general categories: positive attributes and negative attributes. Positive attributes are those that signify the perfections that God is possessed of, whereas the negative attributes indicate the imperfections that are negated of God. Positive attributes are alternatively referred to as attributes of perfection or attributes of beauty, as they affirm the beauty and perfection in God's existence. The negative attributes have alternative names as well. They are sometimes called "dissociative attributes"—as they dissociate God from the properties and qualities characteristic of created being—or "sublimative attributes" — as they pronounce God's eminence But the more common designation for these attributes is attributes of majesty—as they emphasize God's majesty and superiority as distinguished from the inferiority of His creatures.

It is important to note that negative attributes are actually positive attributes in disguise. To negate imperfections of God is to affirm positive attributes for Him: negation of negation amounts to affirmation, as in math where two negative signs cancel each other out, giving way to positive value. Non-ignorance is, for instance, a negative attribute. Now, the content of the concept ignorance is negative, for it indicates lack of knowledge. As such, to negate lack of knowledge of God is to affirm His knowledge, which is a perfection. All negative attributes are in this manner reducible to positive attributes.

God's Most Well-Known Attributes

Some of God's well-known positive attributes are as follows:

1. God is omniscient (al-'Alīm); that is, He knows everything.
2. God is omnipotent (al-Qādir); that is, He has power over all things.
3. God is living (al-Hayy): Life is the quality that enables knowledge and power. God is eternal (al-Qadīm wa al-Azalī); that is, He is without beginning or end.

A number of God's well-known negative attributes are as follows:

1. God is not composite; He is, rather, simple. If He were composite, He would have been in need of His constituent parts, while He is absolutely self-sufficient, without need.
2. God is not corporeal. Corporeal being is finite, mutable, and perishable, but He is infinite, immutable, and imperishable.
3. God is not perceptible, for if He were perceptible, He would have been corporeal, but He is incorporeal.
4. God is without equal; He is unique. If there were other beings on par with Him, He would have been finite and limited, for it is impossible for two absolutely infinite beings to coexist. Furthermore, the unity of the order governing this world clearly demonstrates the unity of its creator.

Reference

To learn more about the Divine Attributes, you may read *God and His Attributes* by Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari (translated by Hamid Algar). The text is available online at www.pureislam.org

Progress Tracking

God is the creator of the world and the creatures. That means He is also the creator of time and space and thus is beyond time and space. That is why we say He is eternal.

Links

It was previously explained that God, the First Cause, must be self-sufficient and infinite. If He were in need of another being, infinite regress would be unavoidable. Yet, it was proven that infinite regress is impossible and absurd. Therefore, God must be self-sufficient, infinite, and uncaused. Refer to the chapter "Cosmological Argument."

Progress Tracking

When we speak of God's negative attributes, we do not mean that alongside His good attributes He also possesses bad and evil attributes. What we mean is that just as God partakes of all perfections He is free of all imperfections, and it is this absence of imperfections that constitutes the content of God's negative attributes. In order words, what negative attributes do is negate imperfections from God. Hence their name. Incorporeal is, for instance, a negative attribute for it negates corporeality, which is an imperfection, from God.

Case Study

Entitative (al-dhātī) and Operative (al-fi'lī) Attributes of God

God's attributes may be divided into two general types: the entitative (al-dhātī) and the operative (al-fi'lī). The entitative attributes are those that the mind abstracts with only God's Essence in view. TThese attributes are predicable of God's Essence as such and without having to envisage His operation and activity that is, without having to take God's creatures into consideration. As such, the ascription of these attributes to God requires nothing more than envisaging His Essence.

The operative attributes, however, are those that are abstracted from the relation between God and creation. That is, God's operation and activity must be taken into view; it is not enough to merely envisage God's Essence. To predicate these attributes of God, it is necessary to take His creatures into account as well. Creator is a typical operative attribute. The mind conceives this attribute only after considering God's activity of creation and the dependency of the world on God. In other words, the ascription of Creator to God requires that the mind first take into account the notion of His creatorship and the world's createdness. It would be wrong, therefore, to ascribe Creator to the Divine Essence as such.

Deducing Divine Attributes from the Concept of Necessary Being

In the lesson on the cosmological argument, it was explained that philosophers consider that argument as the most effective and definitive in proving God's existence. The conclusion of the cosmological argument is that there must be a necessary being who is the uncaused cause of the order of existence. Having proven the existence of a necessary being, theist philosophers go on to analyze the concept necessary being to deduce a number of other Divine Attributes.

The two most immediate notions that come to mind on analyzing necessary being are the following:

1. The necessary being is independent in existence. Were it dependent on another being, that being would be the cause of the necessary being, which would be the effect. The necessary being would no longer be the uncaused cause that the cosmological argument is supposed to prove. But that would be absurd, and so the necessary being must be uncaused, and that ultimately means that the necessary being is self-existent, absolutely independent of all else.

2. All contingent beings are in need of the necessary being for their existence. The necessary being is the ultimate cause of the entire world of contingent beings.

From the above two notions, we may infer the following points:

1. Necessary being must be incorporeal. Corporeal beings are in need of their constituent parts, whereas the necessary being is absolutely free of need. Contingent beings may be dependent on two categories of causes: internal causes and external causes. To be in need of an external cause means that something depends on it for its existence or functions on an external agent that gives it existence or fulfills one of its existential needs. To say that something is contingent on internal causes is to say that it is composite and that it, obviously, depends on its parts for its existence. All material beings are composite (that is, composed of constituent parts), and hence are in need of the parts of which they are composed, and as a result they are contingent. By the same token, God, as the sole Necessary Being, is free of composition, for He cannot be in need of parts, and therefore, God must be immaterial. Consequently, it would be wrong to expect properties associated with material existence—such as, divisibility, time, space, change, tangibility, visibility—to apply to God.

2. He is supersensible and as such inaccessible to the bodily senses. Sensibility is a property of corporeal bodies. When it is rationally demonstrated that God is immaterial and thus supranatural, this conclusion should be accepted as a categorical universal truth. It is wrong to assume that this categorical truth could admit of exceptions. Rational, categorical truths admit

Links

Beings are either in need of a cause to bring them into existence and impart their existential properties to them or they are not in need of such a cause. The former class of beings are referred to as contingent beings, and the latter are designated necessary beings. A necessary being is, on the one hand, self-sufficient (that is, independent and not in need of a cause) and, on the other hand, simple, which means it is not composed of different parts. To be composed of parts is to be in need of the constituent parts, which must have priority in existence. Being in need of something is opposed to being self-sufficient, which is the main characteristic of a necessary being. To refresh your memory on the topic of necessary and contingent beings, refer to pages 26 & 27 of this lesson.

Think About

Why is nature permeated by change? Why do things undergo change? Change is the result of the natural inclination in things to pursue their perfection. In other words, they have some deficiency, which they seek to overcome, thereby undergoing change. But, as explained before, reason affirms that the necessary being has no need. With that in mind, is it reasonable to assume that the necessary being may undergo change in the pursuit of perfection?

Examiner's Tip

You are expected to be able to analyze the concept of necessary being to infer other attributes of God.

no exception. There is no time, place, or existential realm in which seeing Him would be possible. It is unfortunate that some so-called thinkers, citing the prima facie meaning of certain verses of the Qur'an and certain reports in the corpus of tradition, wrongly surmise that the elevated believers would be granted the honor of beholding God in a literal and physical sense in the Hereafter. Qur'anic exegetes, however, have proven the invalidity of such an interpretation by pointing to authoritative verses and reports that unequivocally denounce such an interpretation, and by applying the adequate literary rules, they convincingly prove that the prima facie meaning of those verses and reports should be abandoned in favor of a more profound and coherent meaning.

3. Once materiality is negated of the necessary being, such properties of matter as time and space are also rejected. The necessary being transcends time and space rather than being confined by them.

4. To say that the necessary being is beyond time implies that it must be immutable and free of change. Change necessarily involves time.

Generally speaking, any concept that denotes or connotes deficiency, imperfection, or privation must be dissociated from God, the Unique Necessary Being. That is precisely the purpose of the negative attributes. As mentioned above, negative attributes negate of God all those concepts that are incompatible with necessity of being.

Activity

Look up the following verses and write down the Divine Attributes you find in them:
57:3; 40:65; 25:58;

God's Eternity

Coming into existence, following nonexistence, indicates a being's need for a cause responsible for giving existence to that being. A being that is not in need of a cause must be eternal, its existence never being preceded by nonexistence. As the necessary being is self-existent and uncaused, we conclude that it must be eternal, its existence having no beginning or end. Conversely, if a being comes into existence after having been nonexistent and is subject to passing away into nonexistence in the future, we know that it cannot be eternal. Thus, we arrive at another Divine Attribute—eternity, which means God has no beginning or end.

Divine Knowledge

Imagine yourself sitting in a small room with only one little window to look through to the outside. The room is right beside some railway tracks. As you are sitting there, a train passes by while you are looking out of the window. Since the window is small and the distance between the train and the room is little, you can only see a portion of the train at a time. Further away, someone is standing on a tall building, and is able to view, the entire train at once.

Human beings, like the person in the small room with the small window, view the time-bound world from the narrow pigeonhole of their existence, unable to view the past and the future but only the immediate present. God, however, as the Creator of the world transcends time and space and temporal and spatial phenomena. As such, He has knowledge of everything, spanning the entire spectrum of time and the entire expanse of space.

The concept of knowledge is one with which we are all familiar. The instances of knowledge that we are familiar with, however, are limited and finite. Such knowledge, therefore, is inapplicable to God. Yet the human mind is capable of divesting of knowledge the delimiting qualifications to conceive a mode of knowledge that is infinite and absolute. It is after subjecting the concept of knowledge to this process of mental abstraction that we may validly predicate it of God.

Arguments for Divine Knowledge

There are different ways to demonstrate God's all-encompassing knowledge. Below, we will consider two arguments.

Argument from Design

Links

To review the cosmological argument, refer to pages 26 of this unit.

The spectacular order and design exhibited by the world and its phenomena clearly point to a wise, intelligent, and knowledgeable creator. In other words, order and design in the world demonstrate that the creator must have prior knowledge concerning the nature and characteristics of the creatures to have been able to engage in such awe-inspiring and mind-boggling creative activity.

This argument from design is effective in proving God's antecedent knowledge of creation and His subsequent guidance whereby He manages the affairs of the world and maintains its order, ensuring its continuance despite its drastic rate of change and flux.

Inductive Argument

Another way to prove God's Knowledge is to resort to the inductive argument. The inductive argument for the Divine Attributes, including knowledge, reasons that all the perfections that are found in the creatures must derive from God, and as such He must possess them, albeit with an infinitely greater degree of intensity. If God lacked the perfections displayed by the creatures, He could not have bestowed them onto the creatures. Yet, it is impossible that they could have received them from any other source. Therefore, they must have received them from God, and as such God must partake of the same perfections. Of course, it should go without saying that the perfections characteristic of created beings are plagued by privation and imperfection whereas those of the Infinite Existence of God are free of privation and defect. From this we draw the conclusion that God must be possessed of infinite and eternal knowledge; He is Omniscient.

Jāmī , the celebrated Persian poet, eloquently phrases the above argument in the following lines of verse:

An essence deprived of a part of existence,
  How can it be the bestower of existence?
A dry cloud wanting in water,
  From it cannot issue the character of water-giving....
Who has ever seen a painting lacking the imprint of the painter's brush?
  Who has heard a music lacking the mark of the strikes of the musician's hand?
Contingent being alone is incapable of any work.
  Of necessity there is need for necessary being.
His existence is from Himself and from Him is the existence of the world;
  Consider as naught that which fails to join Him.
The motion of the chain is from Him,
  It is toward Him that this caravan journeys....
Motion and cessation of all things are from Him
  It is He that scatters the seeds and He that spreads the hunting net.

Divine Power

We may compliment someone who is very good in math by saying that he can solve any mathematical problem. The meaning of this compliment is that the person in question is capable of solving all valid and reasonable problems that have real solutions. But what if we pose an unreasonable and irrational question to him? Suppose we ask him for a whole number greater than three but smaller than four. Obviously, he cannot come up with such a number. But his inability in giving such a whole number is a result of the absurdity of the question rather than his lack of knowledge.

Atheists and agnostics often counter theism by raising questions of the following sort: "Can God create another God?" or "Can God create a world that fits into an egg?" In their delusion they think they have placed theists into a difficult position with these questions. If theists answer negatively, which is the correct answer, they would then seize the opportunity to attack the theistic belief that God is omnipotent. If God is omnipotent, He should be able to do everything, so why can He not do the things mentioned in these questions? In this chapter, we will take up these questions. But before that, let us first prove God's omnipotence and consider the nature of God's power.

There are a number of approaches that we can take to prove Divine Power. The clearest proof for Divine Power is the wonderful order and design manifest in the world. Just as the existence of phenomena proves the existence of the Primary Cause, so do the features and characteristics of phenomena disclose to some extent the attributes of the Primary Cause. As such, studying the amazing order permeating the entire world, from the smallest particles to the largest collection of stars and planets, we reach the conclusion that the Creator must have had the necessary power to create this unfathomably vast universe. If He did not have the power, He could not have created the world. This is an obvious fact.

The advance of science has improved our comprehension of the precise order and design immanent in phenomena, thus enabling us to better appreciate the power of God. Every branch of the natural sciences opens a door to an endless series of secrets, everyday uncovering a hitherto hidden aspect of the amazing order of the world.

Yet a more fundamental element that can help us believe and appreciate God's power is our own divine nature, our fitrah. Belief in God's all-encompassing power is yet another innate intuition—in addition to belief in God's existence—imprinted in our nature.

Having proven God's Power, we may now consider the nature of Divine Power. The power and strength that human beings possess is limited and constricted by innumerous factors. When we intend to do something, we are usually required to take certain preliminary steps so as to prepare the appropriate circumstances for undertaking the intended action. We cannot do whatever we wish however we wish. Furthermore, there are innumerous things that are beyond our power.

Progress Tracking

Many Muslim philosophers—including Mullā Sadrā (1572-1640) and 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī (1904-1981)—define power in terms of volition and knowledge. Based on this definition, power may be validly ascribed only to an agent that is equally capable of doing and not doing an action and that chooses to do or not to do it in light of his knowledge. Only in such a case can an agent be characterized as having power to do something.

When hungry, it is impossible for us to obtain food by the mere thought of it. In order to procure food, there are a number of things that we must do in advance; such as buying the raw material, having sufficient fuel for cooking, dishes needed to cook the food in, and so forth. Furthermore, we must be in good health to be able to eat. If our mouth is, for instance, closed shut due to an illness, we would be unable to consume food normally. So all this shows that our power is very limited and confined within a very narrow scope.

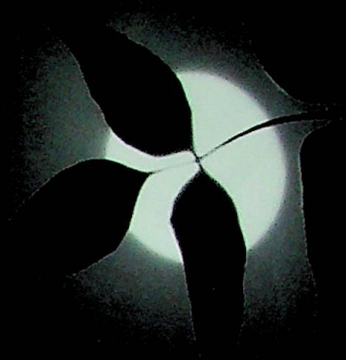
How does Divine Power compare to human power? As an agent's power is proportionate to his existential perfection, we infer that God's Power must be infinite, for He is possessed of infinite perfection. God's power is absolute, being free of all the limitations that restrict the power of created being.

Let us now consider the questions raised earlier. If God's Power is infinite, then why is it that He cannot do the things mentioned in these questions: Why can He not fit the world with its current size into a normal-sized egg or why can He not create another God? Doesn't this incapability imply a limitation in Divine Power?

The answer is quite simple. When we say that God is All-Powerful, we mean that He can produce or actualize everything that is possible within existence. Absurd scenarios and impossible circumstances are necessarily and inherently nonexistent. It is impossible for them to come into existence, because their very nature involves contradiction. In other words, the reason that God cannot carry out the said scenarios is not on account of the limitation of His Power but is rather due to the inherent impossibility of those scenarios.

Another question related to Divine Power is whether God is capable of doing evil. Doing evil does not inherently involve a contradiction and so is, strictly speaking, possible. Yet, we must bear in mind that an agent's power and capability to do something do not require him to do it. This is true even in the context of human activity. We may have power to inflict pain on other people, especially those subordinate to us, but since we consider it to be morally reprehensible and evil, we decide against doing so. In other words, our reason and instincts determine which actions we actually embark on. Similarly, God exercises His Infinite Power in view of His Wisdom. God only undertakes what is good, though He does have the power to do evil as well. His Wisdom, however, prevents Him from doing evil.

This leads to yet another question pertaining to Divine Power, and that is the question of Divine Will. Does God enjoy volition and free will, or is He in some way circumscribed to a certain course of action? Considering that God enjoys the highest degree of power (proven above), there remains little doubt that He must also enjoy the most perfect and intense degree of volition. Nothing is capable of coercing or intimidating God to pursue a course of action against His Will. All other beings derive their power from Him, and so there is no way that their power could prevail over His.



Divine Wisdom

One of the Divine Attributes that enjoys a prominent position in theistic faiths is God's Wisdom (al-hikmah). Numerous definitions have been offered for the adjective wise (al-hakīm).

Al-hikmah (wisdom) is defined either as knowledge of phenomena or as executing an action in the best possible manner. As God possesses the greatest possible knowledge of the world, He is wise in both senses of the word.

A fundamental question related to Divine Activity is whether God's actions are purposive or arbitrary? This question is closely related to the topic of Divine Wisdom. One of the meanings of wisdom is that an agent undertakes actions for a purpose and not arbitrarily. An agent may be characterized as wise if his actions are aimed at reasonable and legitimate purposes rather than being merely impulsive. There can be no doubt that God's actions are purposive and that the ends towards which God's actions are directed are all good and reasonable.

Progress Tracking

God's Knowledge is infinite. He is aware of all the needs of all His creatures. He knows what is beneficial to His creatures and what is harmful. As He is wise, He executes whatever is beneficial to and in the interest of the world and its inhabitants. Consequently, His Actions are absolutely good.

But let us analyze what precisely we mean when we say that God's actions are purposive. Is He purposive in exactly the same sense that the human being is purposive? When human beings exercise their free will and pursue purposive actions, they envisage the intended action and weigh its benefits and the need that it fulfills. After verifying that the action in question is suitable to our needs, we are then motivated to undertake the action. In other words, the purpose of human action is to fulfill one's needs, and so it implies deficiency and privation. This is incompatible with Divine Perfection. God has no need to fulfill: He is absolutely perfect. Therefore, when we say that God is similar to human beings insofar as He is a purposive agent, we do not mean that He is purposive in exactly the same way as the human being.

In light of what has been said in the above, it should be clear that describing Divine Activity as purposive means that His Actions are aimed at realizing certain purposes. These purposes, however, do not concern God's Essence as such, but are rather to the benefit of His creatures. His Actions benefit the creatures rather than Himself. Muslim theologians express this truth by saying that the final cause in Divine Activity pertains to the action, not the agent; that is, God does not seek anything for His benefit, for He is free of need; what He seeks is for the benefit of His creatures.

Progress Tracking

Internal factors are those psychic and mental traits that incline one to engage in criminal and evil behavior. These are factors that pertain to one's character. Psychological disorders, consumption of alcohol, and drug abuse are considered internal factors that lead to vice. External factors are those that pertain to the environment; they are the adverse environmental factors that compel one to undertake evil actions. Bad friends and harsh economic circumstances are two typical external factors.

Activity

Name a number of internal and external factors that are usually associated with evil conduct. Explain why God is beyond the influence of such factors.

Reasoning for Divine Wisdom

There are a number of arguments that prove the purposiveness of Divine Activity and, consequently, the wisdom of God. Below we shall consider one of these arguments.

Actions that are not directed towards an end and purpose are arbitrary. Reason deems arbitrary actions to be objectionable. It is impossible that God should undertake reprehensible actions. Questionable behavior implies an imperfection and defect on the part of the agent. For, a volitional agent opts for objectionable rather than praiseworthy actions as a result of such internal or external factors as ignorance, blind sentiment, illness, hereditary defects, bad upbringing, and negative social influence. But these imperfections and defects cannot affect God. He is absolutely perfect, all-powerful, all-knowledgeable, merciful, and beneficent. We conclude, then, that God does nothing objectionable. He only undertakes actions that are praiseworthy. As such, His Actions are filled with purpose and conducive to the well-being of His creatures.

Divine Wisdom and the Problem of Evil

So far we have shown that Divine Activity is purposive and that God's Actions seek good and reasonable ends benefitting His creatures. An important and highly controversial question that arises in this connection is how we can reconcile the fact of evil in the world with Divine Wisdom. If God means to benefit His creatures, why, then, is there so much evil and pain in the world? The presence of evil in the world would seem to contradict God's Mercy and Beneficence.

The confusion and difficulty in finding an adequate answer to this question has led many in the course of human history to espouse two distinct gods—a good god and an evil god, which are in a perpetual state of war. Some, however, have negated the existence of God altogether after failing to satisfactorily answer this question. Yet others have retained belief in God but have denied some of His Attributes that seem to be incompatible with the presence of evil—such as omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence.

The problem of evil at first seems to belie Divine Wisdom and what was said concerning the purposiveness of God's Actions and the fact that God means to benefit His creatures rather than deriving any benefit for Himself. The evils that occur in the world are detrimental and harmful to all creatures and especially humankind. So how can we reconcile these two facts? On the one hand, we know based on definitive rational reasoning that God's Actions are purposive and that the ends of His Actions are to the benefit of the creatures. On the other hand, however, we cannot deny the existence of such evils as earthquakes, floods, diseases, and volcanoes that inflict pain and death on thousands of people and innumerous numbers of other creatures every year.

This question has received numerous answers. In this chapter we will concentrate on only one of these answers, laying special emphasis on the nature of evil and the reason for its existence. We will show that the instances of evil, such as those cited in the above, are not utter evil and that the good in their existence outweighs the evil that they bear. The existence of these evils is on account of a superior good that can come about only by their means. In other words, rather than being the result of arbitrary or malignant causes, these seemingly evil phenomena are in line with the overarching and homogeneous purpose in creation, though this might be difficult to grasp at first. But before going on to expand on the many advantages and benefits of evil phenomena, we will consider a few very important general points that will enable us in better pursuing this discussion.

Activity

Name several natural disasters which science has been able to show are actually advantageous to human beings.

Pillars of Wisdom

"You may dislike something while it is good for you, and you may like something while it is bad for you. God knows and you know not." (Qur'an 2:216)

Web Links

Studying the effects of natural calamities, scientists discovered some effects which are beneficial to Human beings and the environment. To find out about these discoveries refer to the following website and search for "flood": http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/encyclopedia/flood/?ar_a=1

Links

To learn more about the purpose of human creation, refer to the unit 5.

1 The Limited Scope of Human Knowledge

Considering the narrow boundaries of human knowledge and the unfathomable vastness of all that we do not know about the world, it would seem rash and unwise to categorically label certain phenomena as evil and harmful to our well-being. It is possible that the real advantages and benefits of these so-called evils are so great that the perceived evil in them would appear as minuscule in comparison with their real but unbeknownst good. That human knowledge has so far been unable to shed light on these advantages and benefits does not mean that they are nonexistent. Therefore, we must be more careful in how we speak about the phenomena that are generally seen as evil. The advancement of science may someday prove empirically their prevailing good.

We usually view death as an evil thing. But imagine if human life was unlimited and we lived forever. The earth would be incapable of hosting the incalculable human population, and we would have been unable to pursue a normal course of life on such an overpopulated planet. Or consider the example of volcanoes. What would the earth be like if volcanoes did not exist? In spite of the death toll and destruction is wreaks on human society, the benefits the volcanoes have for human society many times outweighs its evils: the great energy sources that are created by volcanoes; the many natural ecosystems and islands— such as Hawaii —that originate from volcanic eruptions. This is only one example of the benefits and advantages of what we normally look on as natural disasters, which form an integral part of the intricately ordered nature designed by God. But the same truth also holds of calamities caused by man. The incidents and events that we often perceive as distasteful carry numerous benefits that we tend to overlook. Of course, there are numerous other factors involved in the wisdom that necessitates the evil in the world, some of which we will consider in the following.

2 The Final End of Human Creations

The second point that deserves to be mentioned in this connection concerns the final purpose in the creation of the human being, which can play a determining role in how we perceive "evil" phenomena. In light of a religious worldview, the purpose for the existence of human beings is to attain true felicity rather than to indulge the sensual pleasures and enjoy the material comfort of the world. True felicity consists in drawing near to God, which is resultant through exclusive worship and devotion to Him. As such, it is wrong to label certain phenomena as evil only because they cause pain and diminish the degree and extent of material pleasure. It is very likely that enduring pain and suffering adversities are actually conducive to achieving true human felicity. So our conception of the purpose of human life is of paramount importance in assessing what is evil and what is good.

Another important point to consider as regards what we perceive as evil is that evil is contrary to Divine Wisdom and Justice only if the harm that it causes

remains uncompensated, which is not the case, for what we lose as a result of encountering evils is recompensed at least equally if not many times over. In fact, one of the main lines of reasoning as to the necessity of their being an afterlife is that it is people who experience trials and tribulations and remain steadfast in their faith despite the hardships they endure must be recompensed by God. Obviously, this world is not the place where this recompense is awarded, and therefore there must be an afterlife in which God dispenses the due rewards and punishments of humankind. Those who remain steadfast and patient are in essence engaging in a deal with God that can only be profitable. In fact, the faithful can take advantage of any situation they face to improve their spiritual and religious well-being. By practicing patience and remaining steadfast in their faith when they encounter difficult situations and by showing gratitude and exercising thankfulness when blessed by worldly fortunes, the faithful can improve their standing in the eyes of God. There should be no doubt, of course, that patience in the face of hardships is much more meritorious than gratitude for blessings.

Pillars of Wisdom

"Oh you who have faith, have recourse to patience and prayer, for indeed God is with the patient." (Qur'an 2:153)

"And We shall test you with fear and hunger and loss of property and life and dearth of harvest, and give good tidings to those who have patience, those who when an affliction befalls them say, 'Indeed we are for God and indeed we return to Him.'" (Qur'an 2:155-156)

"Say, 'O My slaves who have faith, beware of your Lord: for those who do good in this world there is good, and God's earth is wide. Verily those who practice patience shall be given their recompense beyond any measure.'" (Qur'an 39:10)

Imam Sadiq says, "How wonderful is the state of the believer, as God decrees for him only that which is to his advantage: should he be cut into pieces, it is to his advantage and should he rule over the East and the West, it is to his advantage." (*al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p. 62)

3 The Human Factor in the Occurrence of Evil

When speaking of the problem of evil, we should be careful not to neglect the human factor in the occurrence of many an evil. Exercising his free will, the human being often produces circumstances harmful to himself and his fellow human beings. But as he may be unaware of the connection between his actions and the adverse circumstances, he assumes that the consequent evils are part and parcel of the order of existence and as such construes them as evidence for the absence of Divine Wisdom and Justice.

The use of chemical weapons for instance, can have dire consequences for the people of the region where they are used for many generations to come in addition to the indirect harms that it might cause for the people of other regions. The disposal of harmful chemical refuse into the rivers and seas is another instance of harmful human behavior whose evil implications can affect the people of the entire world. Such evils are perpetrated by the human being in his unscrupulous exercise of free will.

Progress Tracking

The phenomena that take place in the world invariably follow the principle of causality. Whatever happens, whether the product of natural factors or human agency, is governed by the law of causality. As such, when human beings pollute the air, they diminish the effectiveness of the ozone layer in obstructing the harmful rays emanating from the sun, and that in turn leads to global warming, which brings about disequilibrium in the weather patterns. This natural disequilibrium harms all people in numerous ways. But whom can people blame for the adverse consequences of pollution and global warming. They themselves are to blame for their negligent and inconsiderate behavior. It would be wrong to attribute the evils that come about as the result of such negligent behavior to Divine Agency or to cite them as proof for the absence of Divine Wisdom.

Key Terms

Relative descriptions: If attributing a certain description to a subject requires taking a third entity into consideration, the description is termed relative. Compare the biggest ant alive with the smallest elephant alive. The smallest elephant is thousands of times bigger than the biggest ant. This seeming discrepancy is due to the fact that in ascribing big and small to things, we must consider a third entity other than the attribute and the subject, and the third entity functions as the point of comparison. Thus, big and small are relative descriptions.

4 The Relative Nature of Evil

What evil exists in the world is relative, and there is no instance of evil that may be characterized as absolute evil. Evil belongs to the class of relative descriptions (as opposed to absolute descriptions). That is, certain phenomena (and in fact most phenomena in the material world) engender negative as well as positive effects. In so far as they cause positive effects, they are good, and in respect of their negative effects, they are viewed as evil. As such, evil is a relative characterization that describes the detrimental effects of a phenomenon on other phenomena. The negative and undesirable effects that come of such creatures as snakes and scorpions, the harmful and occasionally mortal consequence of diseases, and even the devastations wrought by such natural calamities as earthquakes and floods constitute relative evils. They play a positive role in the larger and cosmic scheme of things, but when we focus on their negative aspect, we naturally view them as evil phenomena. They are not evil in an absolute sense; they are evil in certain respects and good in others. The problem is that we tend to neglect their positive aspect on account of the more conspicuous pain they cause. The venom of snakes is evil only in view of the harm that it brings upon human beings, but it is good in many other respects; the destruction wrought by storms and earthquakes is bad in view of the death and pain they involve, but they are good in many other respects (one of which is that they are an indispensible feature of the material world, and so their flip side, so to speak, is all the good that takes place in the world).

5 Good Outweighs Evil

The world is replete with goodness, mercy, and blessings. The evil that occurs in this world is only a necessary consequence of the nature of this world. As the material world is limited and material entities tend toward conflict and strife—and this is a necessary property of materiality without which the existence of the material world is impossible—it is only natural that a limited and relative presence of evil should ensue. But it must be borne in mind that the amount of good is infinitely greater than the amount of evil—which is a necessary feature of the material world. If evil prevailed over good, the world would have perished long ago. So the very fact of its persistence points to the predominance of good. And since good is predominant, Divine Wisdom requires that the material world should exist. To withhold existence from the material world would be to preclude a great amount of good for the sake of a smaller amount of evil, and this would be contrary to Divine Wisdom. Thus, on comparing the extent of good and evil, human reason undoubtedly arrives at the conclusion that the existence of this world is good and hence necessary.

Case Study

In your opinion, what constitutes evil? Which things can be defined as being evil? The entities that we commonly describe as evil are of two types: 1) A phenomenon that causes non-existence and/or deficiency and 2) Some phenomena which are themselves non-existent and/or deficient. For example, phenomena such as ignorance, disability or blindness, in their essence do not exist, rather they are the absence of a series of perfections. Therefore, ignorance is the absence of knowledge, disability is the absence of ability and blindness is the absence of vision. Blindness in and of itself is not an evil nor is it a concrete reality, in the same way that ignorance is not an existing entity in this world. Hence, when you gain knowledge, something is being added to you, i.e. the new information which you have learned. But, ignorance does not decrease and you are not losing anything. If ignorance, in and of itself actually existed, we should say that the attribute of ignorance has transformed into the attribute of knowledge and not that something has been added to you. This is the reason why they say that, "the nature of evil is non-existent". Other phenomena also exist in this world, which are existents and at the same time are the root cause of non-existence or deficiency and for that reason are considered to be evil, such as earthquakes, floods, etc.

The Purpose of Evil

1. Cultivation of Human Potentials

Due to the peculiar nature of the world and the human being, it is impossible to realize many of the spiritual and psychic potentials without enduring trials and tribulations. Just as an athlete strengthens his muscles by embarking on rigorous and excruciating exercises, human beings spiritual capabilities also require diligent and painstaking spiritual exercises in order to reach fruition. It is interesting to note how most of the scientific breakthroughs and discoveries were made in response to individual and public hardships that compelled scientists to look for a solution.

2. Divine Trials

One of the unchanging norms of God is that He tests human beings by afflicting them with trials and tribulations. God subjects people to various conditions in order that they may show their real character. God's tests may consist in comfort, wealth, and leisure or it may take the form of hardships and adversities. Passing these tests successfully enables the human being to realize many of his inherent potentials, especially with respect to his spiritual aspect.

Affluent individuals bear a greater degree of responsibility in comparison to less privileged individuals on account of the greater amount of wealth they enjoy, and so the former must aid the latter. Those who enjoy the blessing of health and youth must show gratitude toward God by helping the feeble, the elderly, and the young. Helping others, of course, should not be understood merely in material terms but in spiritual and emotional terms as well. An orphan, for instance, may be financially well-off but he is nevertheless in need of emotional care. Helping fellow human beings is one of the responsibilities that come with the blessings God bestows. In fact, one of the major tests that God subjects people to is how well they help the weak and those in need.

Think About !

Do you know how God tests people? What objective does God pursue in testing people? The following example may help you in finding answers to these questions.

When someone inadvertently eats spoiled food, whereby he is affected by food-poisoning, he must endure some pain and hardship. Now, whatever the main cause of his food-poisoning (the person eating the food might have failed to keep the food in the appropriate condition thereby contributing to its spoilage or the producers might be the ones at fault), the ensuing pain and difficulties may be viewed in one of two ways. We may see the pain merely as the result of certain chemical and biological elements, which is true. But there is another approach that we can take, and that is to treat the pain as a test from God. If we succeed in viewing all adversities that we encounter as God's tests and so practice patience in coping with them, remaining obedient to God's injunctions, the adversities, instead of being an impediment, can serve as an opportunity to perfect ourselves and to draw near to God.

Another way in which God tests humankind is by way of afflictions. Whereas the previous test involves blessings, this form of divine test has to do with difficulties and hardships. Should we endure hardships with patience, remaining steadfast in our faith and striving with our thought and deeds to fulfill our duties in spite of all obstacles, God will reward us plentifully. Of course, this should not be misunderstood as implying that we should show indifference toward our worldly prosperity. Islam strongly encourages and instructs the believers to strive to improve even their material life—for themselves and their families—and promises them a two-fold reward for weathering the difficulties in this way: one reward for working to improve the living standards of the family through lawful and sanctioned (al-halāl) means and another reward for putting up with the obstacles that this task involves.

3. God's Warnings

Enjoying the pleasures and bounties of the world, the human being is wont to turn complacent and become neglectful of his higher obligations. Trials and tribulations serve as God's alarms to awaken people from their habitual slumber and to remind them of their religious duties. The hardships and difficulties of life are advantageous in that they humble people and repress their arrogance and hubris, thereby preparing the appropriate circumstances for their return to the path of God.

4. Infusing a Sense of Gratitude toward God for His Blessings and Bounties

Another advantage of undergoing trials and tribulations is that one is reminded of the multifarious blessings of God that one usually takes for granted. It is only when we are deprived of a blessing that we truly appreciate it. The following Persian proverb succinctly states this truth: "Only he who is affected by an adversity can appreciate the value of well-being."

5. Consequence of sins and misdeeds

Some of the afflictions that befall us are a consequence of our sins and misdeeds. These afflictions constitute a divine chastisement. There are two general types of divine chastisement: worldly and otherworldly. Some sins and misdeeds may incur both types of chastisement, some just one. There are sins whose punishment God reserves entirely for the Hereafter. The Qur'an asserts that God helps in increasing the sins of those who oppose and resist Islam despite acknowledging its truth by giving them longevity and worldly prosperity. In this way their sins mount in this world and so God inflicts upon them an exponentially more severe punishment in the Hereafter. The minor sins, however, are more liable to incur worldly punishment as opposed to otherworldly punishment. Thus God afflicts the faithful with hardships so that they may realize the wrong they have done and in this way they may make up for their sins and thus be absolved of otherworldly punishments. For, the severity and intensity of otherworldly sufferings is incomparably greater than worldly punishments. The natural conclusion of this point is that the hardships that the believers endure may seem to be bad but they are in truth a form of Divine Mercy whereby God absolves the believers from having to undergo punishment in Hell. This alleviation in punishment is granted only to sinful believers. The pains and afflictions that disbelievers experience in this world in no way mitigates their otherworldly chastisement: a much more severe and painful chastisement awaits them in the Hereafter.

Case Study

Divine Justice

Prophet Moses once asked God to show him how Divine Justice is meted out. God told him to go near a certain wellspring and wait there. Moses did as he was told. A little while later a man on horseback approached the wellspring to drink water. As he descended to the water fountain to drink water, he set his pouch of gold and silver coins aside. The man ascended his horse and rushed away, leaving his pouch of coins behind.

Not too long afterwards, a young boy came along and drank some water. Seeing the pouch lying their unattended, he picked it up and left with it. No sooner had the boy left than an old man walked toward the wellspring. As he neared the wellspring to drink water, the man on horseback returned in haste in search of his pouch. As the old man was the only one in sight, the man on horseback blamed him for taking the pouch. The old man tried to plead for his innocence but to no avail.

The owner of the coins finally killed the old man and, failing to find his pouch on the old man, left the wellspring. Shocked and dumbfounded, Moses beseeched God to tell him how this murder could represent Divine Justice. God replied that the man on horseback had stolen some money from the boy's dad, who had passed away some time ago and so now the boy was the owner of his father's wealth, which meant that the boy was actually the legitimate owner of the coins. The old man had in his youth killed the father of the man on horseback, and so now the man on horseback was inadvertently avenging his father's murder. God, unbeknownst to the individuals involved, had exercised His Justice.

Think About

Picture a father whose son is begging him to buy him a real gun. The son is employing all the methods of persuasion that he knows to make his father buy him a gun. The father, knowing the danger of a gun in the possession of an adolescent, strongly opposes his son's pleas. Growing angry at his father's refusal, the son starts to beat on his father and cries that his father hates him. How should the father deal with this situation? Should he give in and buy a gun for his son, who as a child is unaware of the danger that a gun poses to his life and the life of others? Or should he persist in denying his son's wish. Obviously, the father would be unjust if he acquiesced in his son's wish, for the son does not know better but the father knows that possessing a gun is against his son's interests.

In the same vein, when we call on God, who possesses unbounded mercy and kindness and whose knowledge is infinite, to fulfill our wishes, justice on God's part does not mean that He should fulfill our every wish, for many of our wishes are detrimental to our material or spiritual well-being. Thus, those blessings that God does bestow onto His creatures are bestowed in accordance with Divine Justice. But even when He refuses to fulfill our wishes, He is being just, for He is acting in our best interest.

Defining Justice

Justice (‘adl) may convey different meanings. The most prominent senses in which the term justice is used are as follows.

• Observing equality and avoiding prejudice. When we use the term justice we often intend treating others equally and without favoring some to the exclusion of others. We should bear in mind that equality is good only if the parties involved are actually equal. That is, if some partake of greater merit than the others, it would be unjust, in fact, to treat all similarly. Those who are truly more deserving of our respect or attention should be given their appropriate due, and blind equality in such cases would be unwise and unethical. By practicing equality in such cases, we are actually being unjust to those who are more meritorious. Suppose a teacher gave the same grade to all the students in the class despite their drastically varying performance on a test. Would that constitute justice or injustice? The bottom line is that justice and equality are not always equivalent.

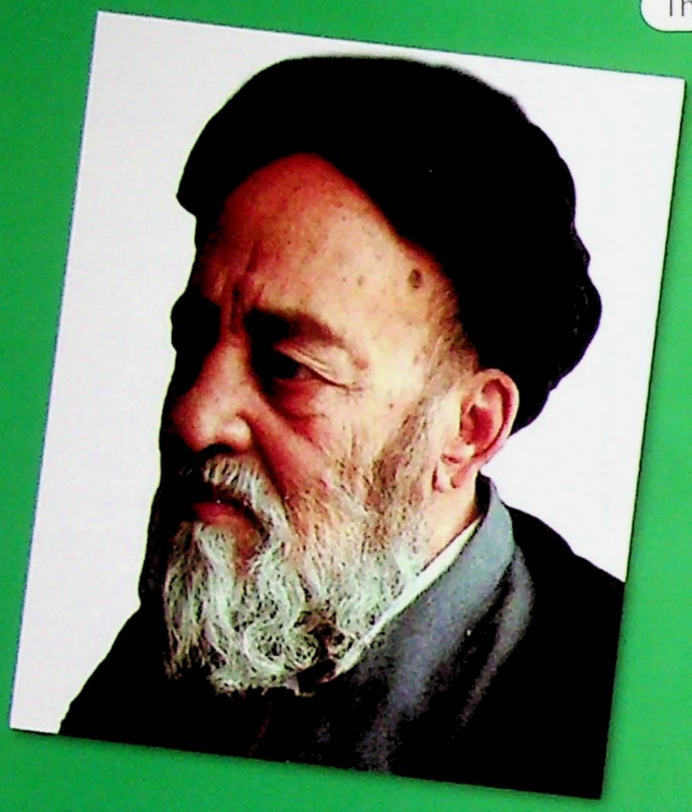
• Respecting the rights of others. Another sense in which the term justice is sometimes used is respecting people's legitimate rights and abstaining from infringing on their rights.

• Giving everybody and everything their due. A more comprehensive meaning of justice is to place everything in its rightful place, to give everybody his due. The ground for this definition of justice is the metaphysical notion that in objective reality, as well as in the Divine Law, everything has a certain and delimited place, and justice is to respect the harmony and equilibrium present in objective reality. This is the broadest sense of justice, which encompasses the prior two definitions of justice.

Based on the above examination of the definition of justice, we may describe Divine Justice as God's treatment of things and persons in accordance with what is their due and what behooves them. That is, God allots to all things their legitimate place in the grand scheme of the world based on their existential capacity and, in the case of free agents such as human beings, their earned worth.

Let us now enrich the discussion further by considering ‘Allāmah S.M.H.Tabātabā‘ī's analysis of the concept of justice and the idea of Divine Justice:

“The essence of justice consists in maintaining or restoring the harmony and equilibrium among things so that everything receives its due. Justice in this sense signifies that all things are equal and similar in that they should be placed in their rightful positions...”



Biography

'Allāmah Muhammad Husein Tabātabā'ī (1904-1981) is the most prominent Islamic philosopher and Qur'anic commentator of the 2oth century CE. He was a prolific writer, a kind teacher, and a wise mentor to those interested in spiritual advancement. Many of the books written by him are now standard textbooks in Shia seminaries and the universities alike.

One of the outstanding accomplishments of this great scholar and mystic was reviving Islamic philosophy and Qur'anic exegesis as two systematic disciplines. His achievements in regard to Islamic philosophy were not confined to his elucidation of Mulla Sadra's metaphysics; he is credited with postulating many original views and principles in philosophy. Employing Islamic philosophy, he succeeded in offering a rational articulation of the Islamic belief-system and a systematic presentation of Islamic theology and mysticism in a way that more adequately addressed the questions raised by modernity. His critiques of modern thinking and especially Marxist ideology, which was in vogue during his time, were very effective in showing the superiority of Islamic thought.

His magnum opus, the encyclopedic *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, is a unique and peerless exposition of the Qur'an that far exceeds all prior and subsequent Qur'anic commentaries both in comprehensiveness and precision. His method of interpretation is intratextual hermeneutics.

Many of the prominent Islamic scholars have studied under him. His students include, among others, Āyatullah Mutahharī, Āyatullah Beheshtī, Āyatullah Jawādī Āmulī, Āyatullah Misbāh Yazdī. His most famous and widely-read works besides his exposition of the Qur'an are , *The End of Wisdom*, *Shia Islam* and *The Principles of Philosophy and the Methodology of Realism*.

Links

In Unit 6, which deals with the doctrine of resurrection, the nature and quality of Divine Retribution will receive sufficient treatment.

Reference

Are the goodness of justice and the evilness of injustice notions comprehensible to all people? To find the answer to this question, read the chapter entitled "Goodness and Evil," from *Justice of God*, by Āyatullāh Makārim Shīrāzī. The text is available online at www.pureislam.org

Classification of Different Modes of Divine Justice

Divine Justice may be divided in view of the different loci wherein it is manifested. As such, we may distinguish three different modes of Divine Justice.

1. Divine Justice in existence. God grants blessings and bounties to His creatures in proportion to their inherent capacities. All potentialities and capabilities are sufficiently provided for. In other words, God caters to the inherent needs of all creatures in accordance with what their nature requires.

2. Divine Justice in legislation. On the one hand, God's law contains all the injunctions and directions necessary for human perfection, nothing being neglected. On the other hand, God's law does not require from people more than what they can handle. As such, God's law, while it is sufficient in guaranteeing the human being's social and spiritual well-being, does not overburden people with unbearable and cumbersome injunctions.

3. Divine Justice in retribution. God is just in rewarding and punishing people. Rewards and punishments are proportionate to the deeds performed. The righteous will be rewarded for their good deeds and the unrighteous will be punished for their evil deeds.

The Relation between Divine Justice and Wisdom

When speaking of Divine Wisdom, it was explained that one of the meanings of wisdom was refraining from performing evil and bad deeds. This sense of wisdom encompasses justice, for justice is good and injustice evil. In this light, the attribute of justice may be considered as one of the branches of the attribute of wisdom.

As such, we may reason for Divine Justice along the following lines. Innate human reason judges that observing justice is good under all circumstances and perpetrating injustice is evil under any circumstance. As God is wise—and wisdom is to refrain from what is evil and bad—reason concludes that God is just and that he necessarily avoids all injustice.

The assumption of injustice on the part of God involves at least one of these three absurd possibilities.

- God is unjust on account of His ignorance. Obviously, one of the main causes of injustice among humankind is ignorance. Yet, ignorance is necessarily negated of God—for it is an imperfection—and therefore, God cannot be unjust on account of ignorance.
- God is unjust on account of His need. One of the other causes for the occurrence of injustice among humankind is need. A tyrant, for instance, needs to provide for an army and so he imposes unbearable taxes on people, which is an unjust behavior. Yet, God is absolutely self-sufficient and free of all need. As such, He cannot be unjust on account of being in need.
- God is unjust on account of an imperfection. Another principal cause of injustice consists of the imperfections inherent in created being. Moral defects, for instance, can compel one to act unjustly. Yet, it has already been demonstrated that God is absolutely perfect. And so He cannot be unjust on account of an imperfection.

As all the causes resulting in injustice are absent in God, God is necessarily just.

God and Creation

We have sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding discussions that God is the Primary Cause and Creator of all beings - the sky, the galaxies, the earth, the trees, the animals, humankind, etc. Beings need God not only for coming into existence but also for remaining in existence. All creatures are in need of God's perpetual and continuous act of creation. A pertinent question is how God created the world and how He perpetuates this creation. What is the framework He has set in place in order to bring about and maintain the world?

A careful examination of nature and the rules governing nature and the interdependence of creatures shows that the basic framework on which the creation and existence of the world is based is the law of causality. The creation of human beings, for instance, follows a set pattern of causes and effects. Even a child would laugh at the possibility that a human being would come into this world as an adult and without deriving from the union of a man and a woman. There must be a union between a man and a woman, subsequently the woman gives birth to a baby, and the baby consumes food and nutrients to grow to be an adult. The law of causality admits of no exception.

Yet, it is wrong to assume that since the law of causality governs the world, there is no place for God. It is wrong to draw the conclusion that human beings are merely the product of a natural process and that God is irrelevant. It is wrong to think that the cause of the growth of plants is "Mother Nature" and that God is a superfluous notion that need not be invoked to justify their existence.

The creation of all natural phenomena is the result of a chain of causes and effects and a combination of natural laws, yet it is important to note that this chain of causality goes back to a self-sufficient, independent, uncreated first cause. This first cause we call God. As elucidated in the Cosmological Argument, all the creatures of the world—including those that we identify as causes of other creatures—are contingent beings, and contingent beings must rely on a necessary being to come into and remain in existence.

Let's consider an analogy to clarify the question at hand. Imagine three mirrors arranged in such an order that the first mirror reflects sunlight onto the second mirror; the second mirror reflects that same light onto the third; and the third mirror reflects that same light onto Point A. Would it be correct to state that the Mirror Three is the cause of the light that shines on Point A? Obviously the answer is yes. Now, would it be correct to say that Mirror Two is responsible for the light that shines on Point A? Here, too, the statement is correct. And how about Mirror One? Would it be correct to say that Mirror One is the cause of the light that Point A receives? Obviously, here too the answer is positive. Finally, is it not the case that the sun, whose light Mirror One reflects on Mirror Two, is the ultimate cause of the light that Point A receives? The answer to this question is also positive. Therefore, as you can see there is no contradiction in ascribing a certain effect to the immediate cause, the intermediate cause, the ultimate cause, or the entire chain of causality. That the chain of causality is necessary does not render the ultimate cause dispensable. This is precisely the type of relation that holds between God and the creatures. God is the ultimate cause of creation, but at the same there are many contingent and even material beings that function as intermediate or immediate causes.

Progress Tracking

It is to be noted that comparing God to the sun is only by way of analogy to clarify a certain aspect of the question we are considering; otherwise nothing is comparable to God. It is an acknowledged property of analogies that despite highlighting a similarity between the two analogous entities involved, they imply numerous differences between them. In this connection, it is appropriate to note an important point in relation to the ascription of certain attributes to God.

All the perfections exhibited by creatures constitute limited manifestations of Divine Attributes. But when ascribing to God attributes we initially abstract from created being, we must be careful to dissociate from Him all the negative connotations associated with those attributes as they are found in created being. When describing God as great, for instance, we must beware that God is spiritual and that He has no spatial dimensions, whereas in material being usually greatness indicates a large size or vast dimensions. Or when we say that God is merciful and kind, we must bear in mind that His Mercy and Kindness are infinite whereas the mercy and kindness we perceive in created beings is always limited and imperfect. The infinity of God's Attributes means that His Perfections are beyond any measure; they are absolute, undefiled, greater than which nothing is conceivable.

Divine Lordship

When we say that God is the Lord of all creatures, we mean that He has established among His creatures a series of interdependencies whereby certain beings depend on other beings for their existence. The amazing order pervading the world is the result of these interdependencies initiated by God. It is thus that the entire world moves as a unified whole toward a collective end. As such, when lordship is ascribed to God it indicates that He is the Creator, the Designer and the Manager.

Creatures depend on God not only for their existence but also in every aspect of their existence. They are utterly dependent, lacking any degree of independence from God. God directs and manages His creatures as He wishes. And as He is wise, just, and benevolent, His management and direction are perfect, flawlessly securing the true interests of all creatures and guaranteeing their ultimate perfection.

Now, as God is the supreme and independent manager of the world, all other causes and agents deriving their effectuality from Him, one of the principal tenets of monotheistic faith is Divine Unity in lordship. Divine Unity in lordship is the belief that He is the sole agent who enjoys independence in agency, activity, and causation, everything else depending entirely on Him. As such, attributing any degree of independence in the management of worldly phenomena to other agents constitutes a violation of this doctrine and thus amounts to unfaith. The belief, for instance, that stars exercise independent influence over our fates is a polytheistic belief and similarly the belief that certain saints can determine our fate independently of God.

But what is the reason, we may ask, for the doctrine of Divine Unity in lordship? Why must we believe that the world has only one supreme lord and king? The reason is that if there were multiple lords, we envisage these lords either as identical or as distinct. If we are envisaging them as one, ultimately what we believe is that there is only one lord, though we may have entangled ourselves in a confusion (like what Christians say concerning Trinity—that it is one and three at the same time). But if we envisage these multiple lords as distinct, they must be distinct in their essence and attributes. That in turn means that their activity and agency must be distinct as well, for distinct agents produce distinct effects. But if that were the case, we would have had a disorderly world made of a number of discordant systems. Yet, as that is not the case, the world we inhabit exhibiting a single orderly and integrated arrangement, we know that there must be only one lord governing it. Hence, the doctrine of Divine Unity in lordship.

Key Terms

The Arabic word for lord is rabb. Arabs use rabb to designate one who manages something in such a way that the managed entity progresses in an orderly fashion toward realizing its purpose.

Pillars of Wisdom

Hishām ibn Hakam asked Imam al-Sādiq (as) concerning the proof for God's oneness. Imam al-Sādiq (as) replied, "[The proof is] the uniformity of order [in the world] and the integrity of creation, and this is as God says, 'Were there multiple deities in the heavens and the earth, they would have perished' (Qur'an 21:22)."

Links

In Unit 4 (on the doctrine of prophethood), the various types of guidance are enumerated. Refer to page 113-115.

Activity

Explain, in the course of 300 to 400 words, why only the creator of the world can function as the lord and manager of the world.

Different Types of Lordship

We may distinguish two general types of Divine Lordship in view of the peculiar jurisdiction in relation to which lordship is perceived. They are as follows.

- Existential lordship. God's Existential Lordship is His Management of the world and His Providence in directing and sustaining all creatures.
- Legislative lordship. This category of Divine Lordship concerns only those creatures possessed of reason and free will. God's Legislative Lordship consists in appointing prophets for the guidance of humankind and ordaining the necessary instructions and directions that can guarantee human felicity.

Thus, when we describe God as the Lord—in which case existential and legislative lordship are both intended—we mean that He is the Supreme King of the world. Among the creatures, some rely on others, yet the ultimate and absolutely independent cause in the world is God. It is ultimately He who provides for the needs of all creatures, nourishes them, and gives them sustenance. Furthermore, God has an additional grace for rational beings. He has endowed them with the necessary internal means of guidance (the intellect and other cognitive faculties) and has made guidance available to them through external sources as well (revelation and prophets), thereby instructing them as to precisely what they must do to proceed toward perfection.

A careful analysis of the two concepts of creator and lord will show that they are correlative. It is impossible that the lord should be someone other than the creator. It is only the creator who knows the intricacies and the subtleties of all creatures and so only He can truly manage and direct them. In fact, reflecting on these two concepts from a metaphysical perspective, we reach the conclusion that lordship is an extension of creatorship. Lordship designates the dependence of the creature on the creator.

The Doctrine of Ulūhīyyah or Divine Unity in Worship

Ulūhīyyah designates the belief that God alone is worthy of worship and obedience. His exclusive right to be worshipped and obeyed is a natural consequence of the fact that He is the sole creator and lord of the world.

Ilāh-translated variously as god, deity, or divinity-in Arabic denotes an object of worship and adoration. Thus, the doctrine of ulūhīyyah (etymologically, ulūhiyyah derives from *ilāh*) is the doctrine of Divine Unity in worship. The only true object of worship, adoration, and reverence is God. On Him we rely; before Him we humble ourselves; Him alone do we fear.

Polytheism

Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism

The One and Unique God is the creator of the world and all the beings that reside in it. He is deserving of our worship and adoration, and in fact embedded deep within the fabric of our spiritual being is the inclination to worship and obey Him. As demonstrated in the foregoing discussions, it is impossible that there should be deities other than the One God. The doctrine of Divine Unity is one that the mind readily comprehends. Polytheism — the belief that there are other deities on par with God— is due to the level of belief and theology and that of practice.

Theological polytheism consists of three distinct—but often coinciding—strains: polytheism in creatorship, polytheism in lordship, and polytheism in worship. Polytheism in creatorship is the belief that there are multiple, independent creators such that no one of them is in any way subject to the jurisdiction of another. A prevalent form of polytheism in creatorship is the false belief that good and evil derive from two distinct creators. According to this dualistic conception, God is the creator of the good things in the world and Satan or a similar evil force—say, *Ahriman*—is the creator of all wicked and vile creatures.

Polytheism in lordship is the belief that there are multiple deities who exercise autonomous authority in governing the world. This strain of polytheism is prevalent in many ancient and even contemporary cultures. Those who subscribe to this belief take the stars, the sun, the moon, and occasionally even certain saints as partaking of autonomous authority in ruling over the world and the forces of nature. This is the type of polytheism that has led many religions astray, as they acknowledge God as the Creator but assume that there are lesser deities to whom He has given unrestricted and independent power and as a result they can manipulate phenomena without having to answer to God. This goes against the Islamic view of Divine Unity, which affirms that all powers and forces, even the greatest of God's creatures (Prophet Muhammad and his sacred household), are subject to the all-encompassing power of God and thus are incapable of undertaking anything against His Will.

The last form of theological polytheism is polytheism as regards worship: that something or someone other than God is possessed of such lofty merits as to deserve to be worshipped. In Islam, worship is the exclusive prerogative of God. Theological polytheism is technically referred to as explicit polytheism. Practical polytheism is called implicit polytheism. Implicit polytheism is much harder to detect, and so even many devout Muslims may be affected by it while assuming to be true monotheists. Practical or implicit polytheism designates the impurity of intention and the reliance on other than God that so often affect our actions. Obviously in point of belief, we are monotheists, as we believe that there is only one ultimate source of power, and that is God. But we often neglect this belief and strive to acquire worldly wealth, power, and fame or we rely on the assistance of fellow human beings when we should rely solely on God. This is symptomatic of the weakness of our faith. The stronger one's faith is, the greater is one's reliance on God and the less is one's attention to worldly powers.

One of the forms in which one's impurity of intention manifests itself is the vice that in Islamic literature is referred to as *al- rīyā'*, which can be translated as affected piety, pretension, hypocrisy, or disingenuity. Al- rīyā' is to perform a religious devotion with the intention of displaying it to others to prove one's piety rather than with the intention of pleasing God or gaining spiritual perfection. Any deed performed with this invalid intention lacks the most basic requirements of acceptability in the eyes of God and to repeat to act with this intention will entrench hypocrisy in one's character.

Progress Tracking

The difference between polytheism in creatorship and polytheism in lordship is that the former indicates the false belief that there are multiple creators from which the world emanates, whereas the latter signifies the false belief that although there is only one creator for the world but the management of the affairs of the world rests with multiple gods who yield their power independently of the Creator God. In effect, polytheism in lordship maintains that God created the world and afterwards delegated its maintenance and management to lesser deities who exercise autonomous power.

Pillars of Wisdom

Concerning implicit polytheism the Noble Prophet says, "Polytheism is harder to descry than the light footsteps of tiny ants on a hard rock in a pitch-dark night. The slightest degree of polytheism is to be happy with some injustice and to be unhappy with some justice. Is religion anything but love and hate for the sake of God? God says, 'If you love God, so obey me [the Prophet], and God will love you' (Qur'an 3:31)." (*Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 16, p. 25, *Hilyah al-'Awliyā'*, vol. 9, p. 253)

Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism Polytheism

A Misunderstanding of Polytheism

Although, polytheism is found in many forms, the definition is fairly straightforward: to view someone or something as an independent power on par with God. This parity with God may pertain to the Divine Essence (in which case the polytheist believes in two autonomous sources of existence), to Divine Creatorship (in which case the polytheist believes in two distinct creators for the world), or Divine Activity (in which case the polytheist assumes the authority of multiple gods in the management and maintenance of the affairs of the world).

The constitutive element of polytheism is expressed by the term, independence. The main factor that renders the adoration of other persons or things besides God is the ascription of independence to them. To practice polytheism is to hold someone or something as yielding divine power or authority without having to answer to the One God. Monotheistic belief, however, holds that all beings are created by the One God and are in need of Him to remain in existence, and their power, authority, and activity are determined by the Divine Will, and whatever they do is dependent on His Power and Will. Where one phenomenon impacts or influences another, the ultimate source of this impact and influence is God, so that all causality hinges on Divine Power and Will. It is impossible that a being should exercise some form of activity without deriving the power and authority for it from God. It is this utter dependence on God that renders all beings His "creatures."

Thus, to attribute power, authority, or causation to a being viewed as utterly dependent on God is true and wholly consistent with monotheism. Should a gardener watering plants view water as the independent cause in preserving the life of the plants, he harbors a polytheistic view. But if he holds that God has endowed water with the capacity to accomplish this end, he adheres to monotheistic belief. In the same vein, when someone who has fallen ill asks a person he considers to be more spiritually elevated than himself to pray for his health, he is not in fact diverging from true monotheism, for in his view God is the One who grants health and the person praying is only interceding on his behalf without possessing independent power or authority. However, should the ill person beseech another with the view that the latter is truly and independently

capable of granting health, he is practicing polytheism.

To visit the graves of deceased believers and to beseech them to intercede with God on one's behalf is no different from going to live believers and asking them for a favor. When we visit the graves of the Ahlulbayt, for instance, and ask them to be our intercessors, we are only acknowledging that they are more spiritually elevated and thus more dear to God, and so God is more likely to grant our wish if they present it to Him. We do not view the intercessors as possessed of independent authority or such a position as to force God to accept their prayers. They are merely the vessel of God's Grace.

Those who accuse Shias of polytheistic tendencies on account of upholding the concept of intercession are ignorant of the true meaning of polytheism and of intercession. They malign Shias without any legitimate grounds. As all of God's creatures deserve respect, it is entirely inappropriate to level such accusations against fellow human beings. Why should a group of people consider themselves justified in so denigrating another people? Islam teaches us to show love and kindness to others, even if they are from a different religion. Thus, there should be no doubt that vilifying Shias with such false accusations and causing discord among fellow monotheists is a reprehensible wrong whether viewed from the perspective of reason or of religion.

Pillars of Wisdom

Verse 64 of chapter 4 ("We did not send a prophet save that he may be obeyed by God's leave. And should they come to you after having wronged themselves while they ask God for forgiveness and the Prophet asks for their forgiveness, they shall find God to be most clement, most merciful") God instructs the Prophet to ask for forgiveness on behalf of others. Obviously God is capable of forgiving people without the intercession of the Prophet. But what this verse teaches us is that God permits and even encourages beseeching those dear to God to intercede with Him on one's behalf, keeping in mind, however, that the will and agency of the intercessors is not independent of God. Their intercession concurs with His Will and is an extension of His Mercy; it is not, as some have wrongly assumed, an independent authority that some people enjoy and that God must heed in spite of His Will.

Reading Comprehension

1) The argument from design is based on two main premises. State these two premises and explain what this argument proves.

2) Express your understanding of the human being's divine nature and explain its qualities. Why is it characterized as divine?

3) Considering the fact that the human being partakes of a spiritual essence–divine nature–that is innately acquainted with God, what reason is there that may compel one to present a logical and philosophical presentation of the Divine Nature Argument?

4) Why do some people neglect their divine nature, turning their backs on God and religion? Specify two reasons.

5) Explain one fundamental difference between the Cosmological Argument and the other two arguments–the Argument from Design and the Argument from Divine Nature–articulated in this text.

6) Explain the two terms necessary being and contingent being. What is the relation between these two types of being?

7) Name and define six of God's positive and negative attributes.

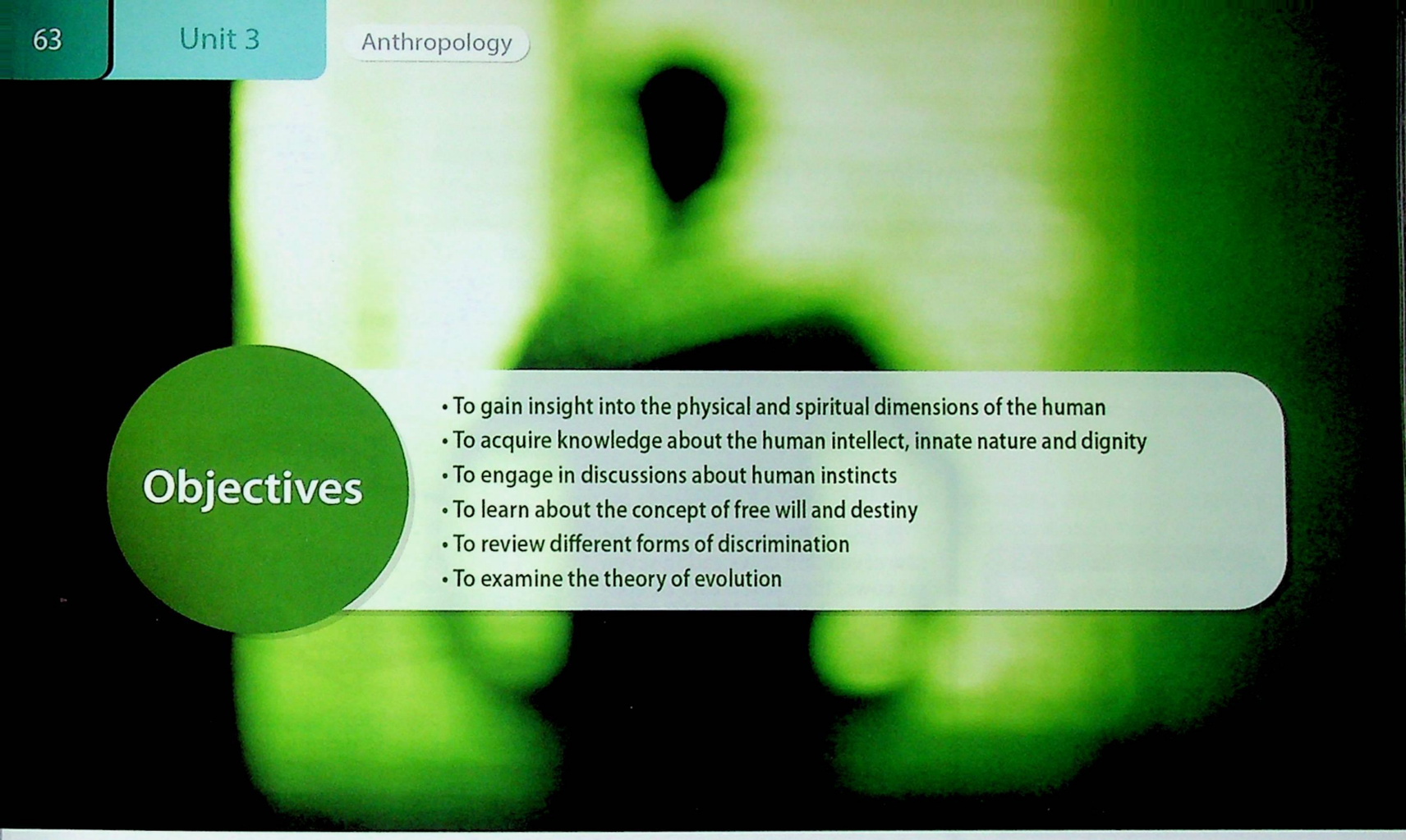
8) Explain how the two divine attributes "self-sufficient" and "absolutely perfect," which the Cosmological Argument directly proves, imply other divine attributes, such as omniscience and omnipotence.

9) Does God have the power to actualize inherently impossible concepts and scenarios? Elaborate your answer in the context of an example.

10) Explain why it is impossible that God should undertake a purposeless and unwise action?

11) Based on the explanation this lesson provides on the relative nature of evil, give two examples of the good that is consequent on some instances of what people may conceive as the evils in nature.

12) The definition of polytheism is "to view someone or something as an independent power on par with God." In view of what it means to perceive something or someone as independent, explain the wrong that a misunderstanding of the true meaning of polytheism may entail.



Objectives

- To gain insight into the physical and spiritual dimensions of the human
- To acquire knowledge about the human intellect, innate nature and dignity
- To engage in discussions about human instincts
- To learn about the concept of free will and destiny
- To review different forms of discrimination
- To examine the theory of evolution

Activity

State several important features of the human that can provide a relatively complete picture of him.

A Question without an Answer

Do you know what has been one of the most complex questions in the history of humanity? A question that, despite the efforts of many scientists, still remains unanswered! Undoubtedly from the beginning of history until now, the human has discovered much about his environment and the creatures that inhabit it. He has made many inventions and discoveries and has gained an acceptable level of knowledge and technology. At times he has lived alongside animals for years in order to learn about them or has engaged in lengthy research to discover the laws of nature. He has studied minute creatures such as bacteria and viruses so that he can treat illnesses and has even sent probes to other planets in the hope that one day he will be able to live on them.

However, it is strange that the human being who possesses the power of thought, has unravelled many of the wonders of the world, made numerous voyages to outer space, yet is still incapable to grasp one particular being. Even though, he has lived, eaten, slept and interacted with this creature for centuries, humans are still unable to comprehend this one creature.

What is this creature that the human as yet has not been able to fully comprehend? You have guessed correctly that this unknown creature is the human himself And, despite all the efforts undertaken to identify man, still, success has not been achieved.

This unknown entity is the human being and despite all the efforts undertaken to discern this mortal, it still remains a mystery. Why are human abilities still unknown? If you look at history you will be aware that many scholars from the East and West have endeavored to provide a complete portrait of the human, but none have accepted what has been proposed as a complete description, why?

The Mysterious Complexity of the Human Being

Why are humans an unexplained creature?

Some actions emanating from individuals cannot be rationalized by empirical sciences. Therefore, the question comes to mind, from where do these hidden powers originate within the human being? The following are some examples of the mysterious actions of humans:

The mystery of dreams

In one of Pharaoh's dreams, he saw seven thin cows eating seven fat cows, then seven ears of corn being replaced with shrivelled ones. Pharaoh summoned all of the dream interpreters to decipher his night vision, but they failed to provide any concrete explanation. Thereafter he called for Joseph and asked him to interpret his dream. Joseph said that its meaning is there will be seven wet years followed by seven years of drought and therefore in the first seven years a part of the produce should be stored so at the time of drought the people will not suffer from starvation.

This story appears in Genesis in the Bible and also in the chapter of Yusuf of the Holy Qur'an. Have you wondered what a dream actually is? Is it possible that humans can unconsciously be aware of the future? What truth lies behind these historical events?

In dreams, we go on journeys, deal with people, make friends and enemies, and gain or lose things. More or less, people witness these scenes in their dreams. Some of our dreams are an interpretation of the future and what we have seen in our dreams takes place in the real world. Who causes future events to be shown in our dreams and informs us of happenings that we would never have imagined?

Discovering the reality of dreams can help us in understanding the human and present a new dimension to the life and existence of the human. The human has always experienced dreams and because it was found by experience that dreams cannot be unrelated to his life, he has always sought to discover their meaning. Dreams seem to be an inseparable part of our existence.

The studies of academics have reached a conclusion that all people, even those who deny it, experience dreams. The existence of dreams is as obvious as the existence of breathing.

Neil Carlson, a famous psychologist, writes:

"Some people insist they do not experience dreams; these people are mistaken. Everyone sees dreams but the majority of dreams are forgotten. If a person does not wake up during a dream, or immediately afterwards, the dream will not be remembered. When most people who imagine they have not experienced a dream for years are awoken in a laboratory whilst experiencing a dream, they are momentarily shocked at the vividness of their dream."

Discussion Activity

In small groups, discuss real stories of dreams. What conclusion do you come to in regards to the connection between dreams and the existence of the soul?

Progress Tracking

What we normally see in our dreams is that we have no limitations with regard to time and space. In a dream we are able to visit the past, future, distant and unfamiliar countries, outer space or go underground. These extraordinary features of dreams have attracted the attention of man.

Has it ever happened that one of your friends has called you at the precise moment that you were thinking of them? There are people who have testified to being able to transmit and receive messages or images from remote locations without making use of the five senses. Although the transfer of thoughts or images is possible between normal individuals, this phenomenon occurs mainly between two people who have a strong emotional bond, such as a mother and child, or between very close friends.

Scientists have done a great deal of research on the subject of telepathy, or the sixth sense, particularly between twins. This research has shown that twins can be in communication with each other, even though there is a great distance between them.

The reality, that a human can understand things that is not possible through material means and the five senses, is confirmed by many eminent scientists of the world who interpret it as being inspiration and illumination.

Hypnosis

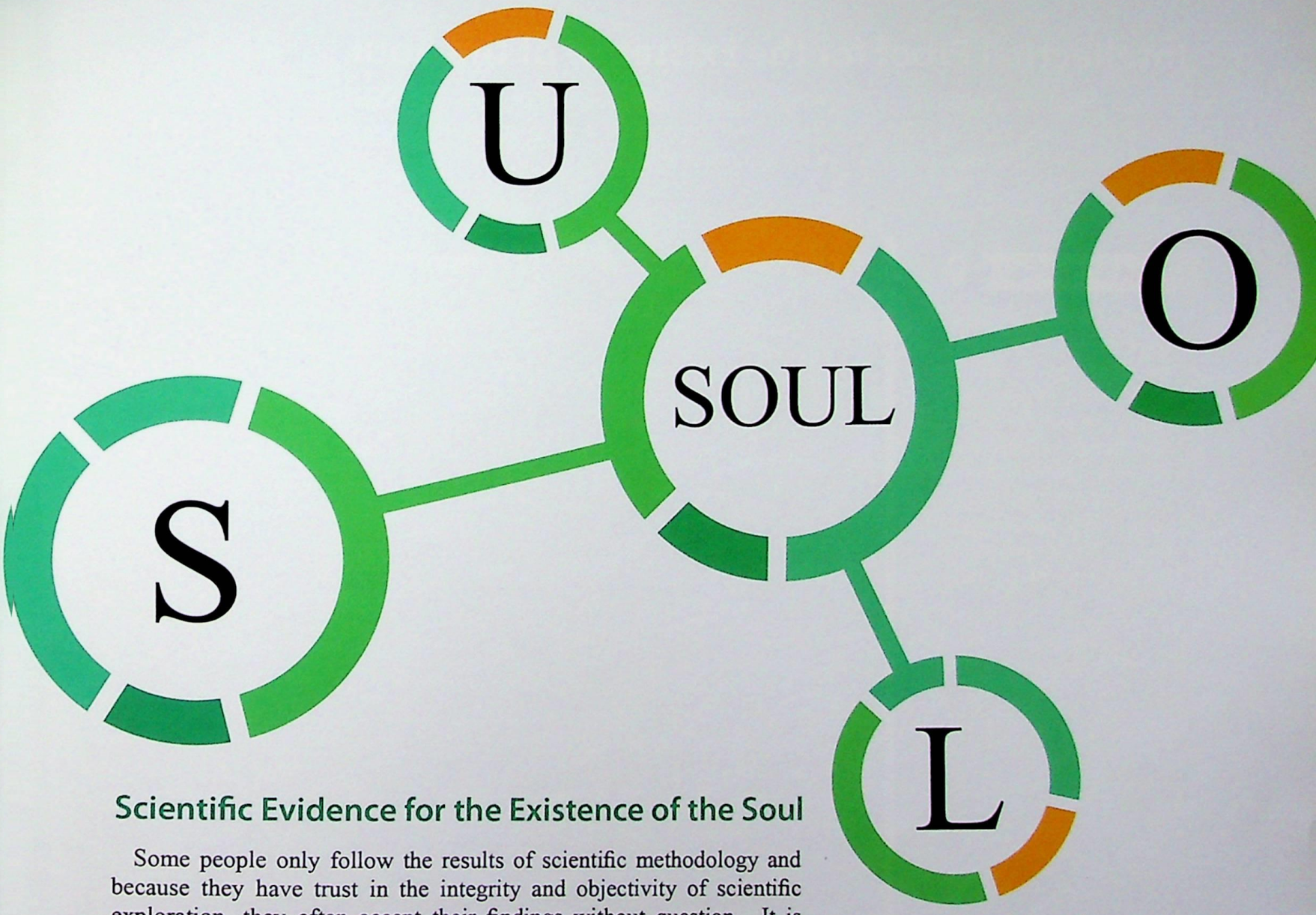
Think About

Are you able to name other signs for the existence of a soul within humans? Can dreams, telepathy and hypnosis be evidence for a supernatural and spiritual power within humans?

Has it ever happened to you that while you were walking or driving, you suddenly came to your senses and wondered how you travelled through the streets without being aware? At the time, you were certainly in full control and performed the appropriate actions, but you were, in fact, in a mild state of hypnosis.

It should be noted that hypnosis cannot be regarded as a state of sleep, even though the hypnotized person looks as though they are sleeping. Under hypnosis, a person is able to think, talk, make judgements and perform various tasks as usual. On most occasions, people who are under hypnosis recognize that their behaviour is under the control of the hypnotist, the hypnotist is not able to force his subject to perform actions that do not conform to his values and principles. In studies done on this aspect of hypnosis, volunteers refused the unethical demands of the hypnotist or came out from the state of hypnosis.

What power exists beyond the material and physical power of the human that creates such extraordinary happenings? Can it be said that all of these wonders relate only to the human body?



Scientific Evidence for the Existence of the Soul

Some people only follow the results of scientific methodology and because they have trust in the integrity and objectivity of scientific exploration they often accept their findings without question. It is perhaps for this reason that scientists have given themselves a new mission and extended the realm of their research to human metaphysics.

In the last twenty years hundreds of books have been published by medical scientists exploring the near-death experiences of hospital patients or by psychiatrists making use of hypnosis that support the existence and permanence of the soul and the matter of the subsequent life of humans. For example, the book, Life After Life, by Raymond Moody, which has been a best-selling book, shows that the souls of some hospital patients who have undergone operations have temporarily left their bodies. This has meant that they have witnessed their own operations or they have visited their homes and families and been aware of their current situations.

Discussion Activity

Divide yourselves into a number of groups and discuss your own experiences in regards to proving the existence of the soul. At the end of the discussion, vote for the best experience.

Scientists have researched the subject for many years, of whether the existence of the soul can be proved through experimental science. The existence of phenomena such as hypnosis, telepathy and the unconsciousness of those undergoing operations have enabled scientists to perform research on this subject and write many books based on their own and client's experiences, which testify to the existence of the soul.

Intellectual Proof for the Existence of the Soul

Many proofs have been offered by scholars to prove the existence of the soul, which include intellectual as well as empirical proofs, such as from psychology. Philosophers have given more than ten intellectual proofs for the existence of the soul, only two of which we will mention here:

Progress Tracking

The previous discussions regarding dreams, hypnosis, and telepathy were merely indications of the existence of an immaterial dimension within the human. On this page, you will gain some comprehension of one of the intellectual proofs for the existence of the soul.

1st Argument: The Stability of Personality

• A study of the human body shows to us that many different organs and systems of the body are affected by two critical processes: absorption of materials from outside and their conversion to energy, which within a few years, leads to their renewal and replacement. A constant and permanent transformation occurs in the molecules and particles of bodily parts. Old cells are obliterated and by way of the nutrition, new cells are created in their place. During a lifetime, the cells and parts of the body are many times destroyed and replaced.

• Despite these developments and changes in our physical and material being, we always remain the same being and person. We can, throughout our lives, say 'I' and this refers to our unchanging self, even though we may live for over a hundred years.

• From the sum of these two premises, it is natural for us to come to the conclusion that within ourselves, other than changeable matter, there exists another permanent reality that does not change. This cannot be a part of the body because the body is constantly in the process of change and so it must be something immaterial in order to not be affected by change. This immaterial existent is what is referred to as the 'soul'.

The name of this argument is the argument of the unity of personality. This is because this argument refers to the fact that throughout the lifetime of people, including their childhood, adolescence, youth, middle age and old age, their bodies undergo much change. However, with all these changes, their personal identity remains the same.

Think About

Some scientists have speculated that if there are cells that exist in the human body and that they remain alive throughout the whole time the human is alive, and no new cells replace them, the argument for the existence of the soul will be invalidated. However, they are unaware of the fact that even if these cells existed, for example, within the human brain, this argument in no way would be invalidated as this argument is based on two things: 1) change and transformation in material substances and 2) constancy in character.

The point is that even though the cells (if science proves their existence) remain alive while the human is alive, within themselves, they undergo much change and transformation. They grow and feed, and even reproduce, but the character of the person and what we interpret to be "I" always remains constant and we associate all desires, abilities and everything a human possesses to that. We say: "I feel", "my life", "my hands and feet" and "the cells of my body"

Case Study

According to those who say that man has no soul, his existence is limited to only his physical body; and because biological and medical scientists have demonstrated the constant changing of cells and organs, every person differs each hour from the previous hour and it must be said that he is a different person. This is because the parts of his body have changed and his identity is nothing other than his physical body. With this is mind, we consider the following question:

If humans did not have a soul, what problems would they have had? One of the problems would be the injustice of many court rulings! For example, a person who committed a crime at twenty years of age; if the police arrested him when he was forty years old, no court could punish him for his action because in the course of those twenty years all the cells of his body have changed. At that age he has become a different human who has not committed a crime and he cannot be punished in the place of the other person. In fact, all people agree that he is the same person and courts would thus sentence him to punishment.

Think About !

Today, many academics are engaged in research regarding the nature of some of the human's spiritual affairs and the manner of formation of these mental states. These mental states include sorrow, joy, pain and the awareness that distinguishes a human from inanimate objects. However, all admit that solving this puzzle in terms of material body parts is not possible.

2nd Argument:

Human Personality is Indivisible

Among the characteristics of material beings is their ability to be divided. Take a look at the objects that are around you; with a little attention you will be able to discover the fact that all the objects have the capacity to be divided into parts. This includes all material things that can be seen with the eye, such as trees and household furniture, and also material things that are not normally visible to the eye, such as the air and magnetic waves. For example, you can divide a chair into smaller parts and you can separate the air inside a blown balloon from the air surrounding it. This capacity for division also holds true for the human body: it can be divided into parts. Thus, anything that is material has the potential to be divided into smaller components and this is one of the most striking properties of matter.

However the 'I' within every person cannot be divided and so it must be immaterial. Consequently, if a person loses one of his limbs, he still says "I am studying" and "I am reading a poem" and never says "three-quarters of me is studying" or "three-quarters of me is reading a poem." No person can divide his personality and nature into different parts, but all material beings are dividable in some manner. Therefore the personality and nature of a person, i.e. his soul, cannot be material.

Pillars of Wisdom

According to the Qur'an, there is no doubt regarding the existence of the human soul. God, in honouring this creation, has attributed it to Himself.

The Qur'an in regards to creation of the soul states:

So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him. (15: 29)

In another place it also states:

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death (39: 42)

We understand from this verse that the death and destruction of the body does not harm the survival of the human soul and the soul can exist independently of the body.

The Story of Evolution

Sailing on the ship lasted for five years. Charles Darwin, the famous English biologist, was so heavily influenced by the glory and wonders of nature that sailed to South America to engage in geological surveys and study fossils. Over a span of five years, he gathered the specimens of thousands of living organisms, many of which were unknown to Western scientists. The detailed notes he made from his observations, were used to form his future theories.

He wrote in his memoirs:

"The birds live on the island; they are of only one breed but there are different types. The way of life of the reptiles, birds and other animals varies from island to island, but a principle of similarity between all of them can be seen. If all of creation occurred at one time, the question arises: why are differences observable between the types of living creatures?"

One year before Darwin's journey, a controversial book by Charles Lyell called *Principles of Geology*, had been published. Lyell claims that transformation of the Earth's crust has been caused by gradual processes, which have been a uniform process of nature throughout history. In addition, he explained that every living organism initially grew from a center point, then spread out, survived for a period of time until they disappeared and were replaced by other types. Hence he concludes that the emergence of new types of organisms has been a steady stream throughout the history of Earth.

This theory was contrary to the common belief of the time and caused a stir within academic circles. By examining the layers of rock and fossils in different areas of the land, Darwin found a lot of evidence to support Lyell's theory. On various islands he found similar but not identical fossils of living organisms. Darwin observed that the turtles and finches living on the separate islands were not homogeneous. In his opinion, the best explanation for these differences was that the different types of organisms have undergone change while having a common ancestor.

Thus, Darwin's theory of evolution began to take root in his mind. In his belief, the variations he was observing between the different types of organisms were due to them having undergone transformations. But, what factors caused these changes and how did they happen? This question remained in his mind until he studied an essay on population written in 1838 by the famous British economist, Thomas Malthus. Malthus believed that the human population was growing but that the food supplies were dwindling. From this research paper he concluded that the human race must prevent excessive population, if not the population on Earth would be more that what the food supply could sustain.

This theory attracted the attention of Darwin and he then understood how and why organisms could change from generation to generation. He believed that human beings could breed domestic animals to have the attributes they desired. Accordingly, those which did not have the desired traits would have their reproduction restricted and those having the desired attributes would undergo breeding leading to an increase in their population.

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, was Malthus' proposed solution correct? Is population control the only solution or could the management of food availability also be a solution?

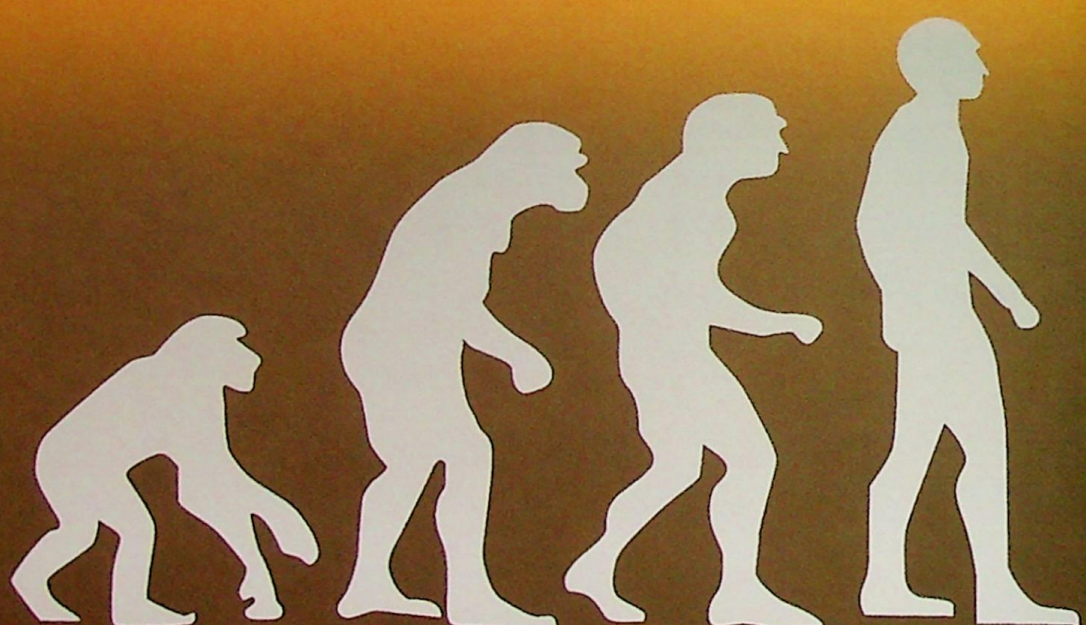
However, he observed that different species of wild animals also had differences among themselves. So then, he asked the question, how did these differences occur without the assistance and intervention of humans?

Malthus's theory again aided Darwin in his thinking. Man is forced to acquire food in order to survive. In order to carry out this essential task, he must battle against his environment in order to overcome it. Wild animals are also in this situation. If the availability of food is not sufficient for them, the only animals able to survive will be those that are ardent opponents of nature, i.e. those able to develop the appropriate traits and eliminate undesirable traits. Thus, the only creatures that live in this struggle for existence are those with properties allowing them to overcome nature. Darwin called this process "natural selection".

This process causes features that are useful to become more widespread and, over many generations, a population can obtain that many new features that they then become a new species of organism. This process of change in life forms over time and across generations is also called "evolution".

Darwin published his theory in 1859 in the book "*On the Origin of Species*". According to this theory, all life on Earth is the result of a natural ongoing process. This theory requires that all living organisms on Earth to have a common ancestor.

The nineteenth century, due to the resulting effects of Darwin's theory of biological evolution, has been named Darwin's century.



Darwin's Theory of Human Descent from Monkeys

Charles Darwin wrote about the origin of humans in his book, *The Descent of Man*, in which he denied all the basic differences between humans and animals and regarded all the physical and mental qualities of humans as having been evolved from other animals. He said that the human brain is at a more perfected stage than the monkey brain and that primitive man was the intermediary between advanced monkeys and humans. The existence of hair on the body of the humans and animals is an attribute common between them and all the differences in humans such as standing on two feet, the shape of the face, movement of the hands and such mental traits as imagination and illusion are partially observable in monkeys. Characteristics in humans such as sacrifice, affection and altruism have been brought about through "natural selection". Darwin concluded that there is no reason to see human beings as being fundamentally different from all other animals. Thus man, who up to that

Darwinism and Disorder in Creation

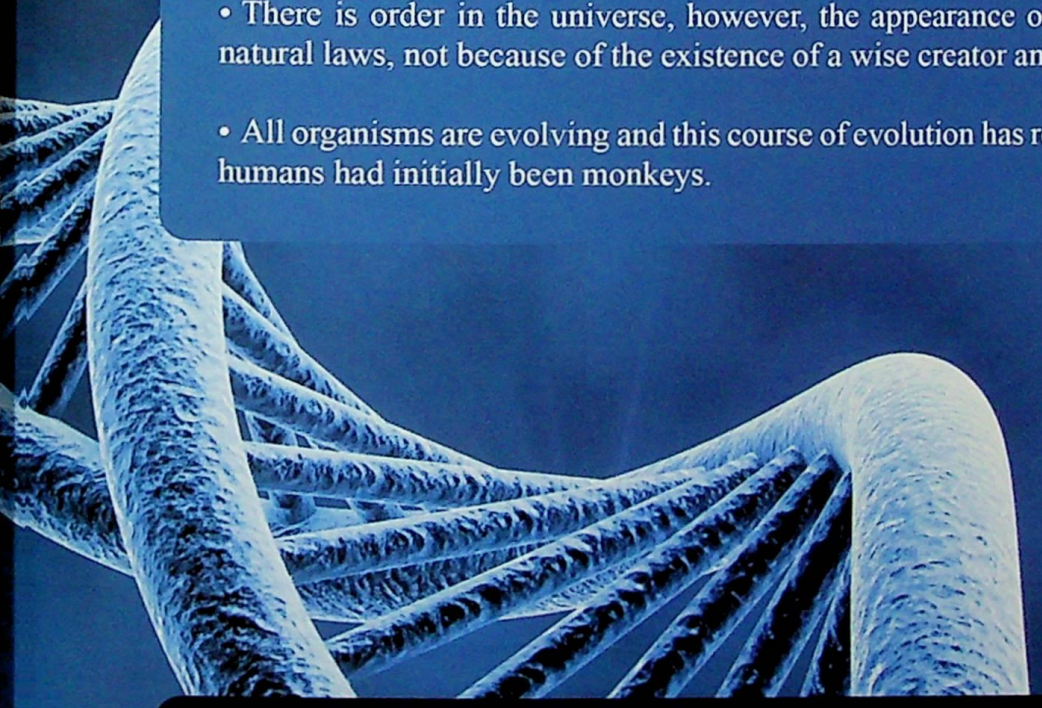
As noted in the discussion on the argument of design for the existence of God, creation, with all its wonders, has a special design. Since it was demonstrated that the Creator of this design is wise and all His actions are performed with wisdom, therefore all creation came into being for a specific purpose. Although, Darwinism accepts the existence of design in creation, at the same time it says that evolution is a law of nature which plays a random and unbounded role in the development of species. In other words, changes are essentially random and nothing but environmental pressures and the struggle for survival, direct the evolutionary process.

The Main Foundation of Darwin's Theory

The two principle claims on which Darwin's theory is based:

- There is order in the universe, however, the appearance of this order was the effect of coincidence and natural laws, not because of the existence of a wise creator and regulator.

- All organisms are evolving and this course of evolution has resulted in changes within species. For example, humans had initially been monkeys.



Short Answer

That which Darwin stated in regards to the theory of evolution differed from that said by some proponents of the theory who had their own aims. Darwin himself believed in God and was religious and never wanted his theories to be used to reach the conclusion that there is no God. As Darwin had said, the world is highly regulated and we are witnesses to gradual evolution within creatures, but what some supporters of Darwin have said, which is more controversial, is that there is no need for a regulator. What the supporters of Darwin have used to dismiss the proof of design for the existence of God, can, in the words of Āyatullah Mutahharī, be used to affirm this proof for the existence of God. The followers of Darwin assumed that if the evolution of various creatures and the governing of this process by the laws of nature are proved, then there is no longer a need for the existence of a regulator. This is while the existence of natural laws which cause change and evolution within creatures is not only compatible with the existence of a wise regulator, it even affirms the necessity for the existence of a wise regulator. When Darwin says nature selects the fittest, this selection is a cause for an organism to move towards

The View of Biologists

The reality is that the theory of evolution and the origin of species are still at the hypothetical level with no substantiated proof to support its claims. Scientists have different opinions on the validity of this theory which is fraught with many unanswered questions and ambiguities. Opponents agree with the principle of evolution within organisms, however, they have questioned the development of new species. We will examine some of their arguments in the following passages:

The famous geneticist, Jianzhi Zhang and his colleagues at the University of Michigan, compared the DNA of humans and chimpanzees together. Zhang's group found that nearly 6 million years ago, chimpanzees and humans were separated from their common ancestor: 233 genes of chimpanzees in relation to the common ancestor had changed, but only 145 genes of humans had changed from the common ancestor by natural selection.

This finding was inconsistent with what many evolutionary biologists considered to be true because the result of this investigation shows that the chimpanzees of today have undergone more genetic change than humans. In other words, the common ancestor underwent less change in becoming human and underwent much more genetic change in becoming a chimpanzee. Scientists have discovered that chimpanzees are more evolved than humans, whereas the theory of evolution tells us that humans are more evolved.

The scientists, who supported Darwin's theory, loudly claimed that they did so. The problem stated by some of the scientists who were staunch supporters of Darwin's theory is that between the fossil evidence of animals that lived in the past and related animals existing today, no intermediate fossils remain; it is as if the earlier animals suddenly evolved into the animals of today.

Darwin also realised the flaws in his hypothesis, but believed that one day intermediate fossils would be found. In explaining this problem, evolutionary scientists have proposed that maturation occurred with such speed that no fossils remain. However, biologists who are opposed to the theory of Darwinism state that no scientific evidence exists for this claim.

The idea of change within species of animals is accepted by biologists but the theory that all organisms have one common ancestor is opposed by a number of scientists. Although many arguments have been made against this part of the theory of evolution, they are mostly technical and only expert biologists would be able to understand them.

Progress Tracking

Note that despite the existence of differences of opinion among natural scientists and biologists in regards to the theory of evolution between species, the proving or disproving of this theory has no effect on the validity of the Islamic religion.

Key Terms

All Abrahamic religions believe in prophethood, namely that God chooses the messenger to whom He sends revelations, either directly or through an angel. The term 'Abrahamic religions' is used for those religions that were inspired by the ancient tradition of Abraham in the Semitic writings. Islam, Christianity and Judaism

Activity

In 300 - 400 words write several criticisms by Western academics of Darwin's theory.

Abrahamic Religions and Gradual Creation

In the Bible as well as in the Qur'an, it states that man was created in his current form and with complete intelligence and wisdom, not in the form of an animal such as a monkey, which lacks human sagacity and reason. Between this aspect of Darwin's theory (that humans are the outcome of an evolutionary process) and holy religious texts, no compatibility exists.

'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī writes in *Tafsir Al-Mizan*:

"The verses of the Qur'an imply that modern man descended from a specific man and woman and in the Qur'an that man has been called Adam. That man and woman were not born from a mother and father; rather they emerged from soil, clay or baked clay, or earth. Therefore the creation of humans was instantaneous and not over the course of time."

The disagreement of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī with Darwin's theory had not only been due to its incompatibility with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an's verses; in his view, this theory had not reached the border of certainty and was still a hypothesis which had been proposed to explain some matters. Therefore it is completely speculative and cannot stand up against the Qur'anic truth that the human is distinguished from other types of animals and did not evolve from them.

Another scientific reason for 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī's rejection of Darwin's view of evolution is that the generational continuity of humans and monkeys is not able to be observed; so far we have not seen that one type of being has changed into another type of being. Hence, it has never been witnessed that a monkey has changed into a human. Some academics in the West have also raised similar objections.

The reality is that the evolution of different organisms is a scientific principle and has been proven; however with the meaning that the possibility of genetic change within organisms is possible. Depending on differences in weather and geography and due to the passing of time, changes within species do occur. However to say that all organisms or animals have a common ancestor is a theory that has not been scientifically proven and also has many opponents.

Darwin's Theory and its Influence on Human Thought

Although this new theory was influential in the fields of biology, geology and medicine and after his death, led to the discovery of genes, chromosomes and ultimately DNA, by other scientists, it became a model for ethical theorists and brought about the emergence of, 'Darwinist morality'. The greatest influence of Darwin's theory can be seen in other academic fields, such as the social sciences, philosophy, ethics and theology and the empirical sciences of that time.

Activity

What changes occurred in human ethics after Darwin's theory? Write the results of your research in 300-400 words.

Activity

Investigate who benefited most from Darwin's theory. Did the scholars expand upon this theory into the social realm or did the politicians take advantage of it and spread it in order to increase their power? Write the results of your research in 300-400 words.

Darwinist Morality

It is said that, because the struggle for survival and selection of the fittest is the law of nature, people in society should also be like this. In accordance with this law, the strong are entitled to eliminate the weak; this system was considered to be of value. Any opposition against the evolutionary survival of the fittest was considered to be negative. According to this principle, war and violence in human societies, as with other animals, is inevitable. Due to the effects of reproduction over many generations, the human species like other organisms, will be subject to a shortage of food, followed by conflict with the aim of survival. If this is so, then what role do humanitarian and ethical principles have?

As a result, such acts as helping the poor, the vulnerable and the sick are all considered evils. Words such as love and affection, intimacy and a sense of brotherhood and helping your fellow man have lost their real meaning. It is obvious that such a moral system is completely incompatible with a religious moral system that urges the helping of the poor.

The capitalist class, seeing themselves as being in social competition, and based on this principle, regard themselves to be the most successful. Becoming more worthy is achieved through the accumulation of wealth and social power. Humanity has witnessed two world wars, in which the most heinous crimes and killings took place to achieve wealth and power.

Who am I?

The majority of people will ask themselves the question, "Who am I", within their lifetime. This query has been one of the fundamental questions posed by humanity and intellectuals have spent years thinking and researching to find the answer.

Understanding the identity of a human can take two forms: 1) Through personal identification, referring to the names of a person, their date and place of birth and the activities the person has engaged in throughout their life. These are all details which identify the person and 2) Is human recognition, whereby the attributes and features of a human are identified, basically those traits which are believed to constitute human nature. Here we will refer to some important human qualities, which play key roles in defining his humanity. An individual inherently posseses reason, nature and dignity and seeks to achieve maximum perfection in areas such as knowledge, morality and beauty.

The recognition of these attributes can help man find answers to another one of his important questions, which is regarding the perfect human. When the most prominent human characteristics are studied, the conclusion is that the immaculate human being is the one who has developed within himself/herself all the values and talents to the maximum, in such a manner that they are in complete harmony with each other. It is interesting that no one of these features alone can be an accurate measure to assess humanity; all of them contribute to humanity. What is certain is that we are not looking at only one dimension of the human and measuring him by that. The features that we are considering differ from those recognized within the sciences such as biology, medicine, physics and other sciences which only study man from a materialistic view.

Discussion Activity

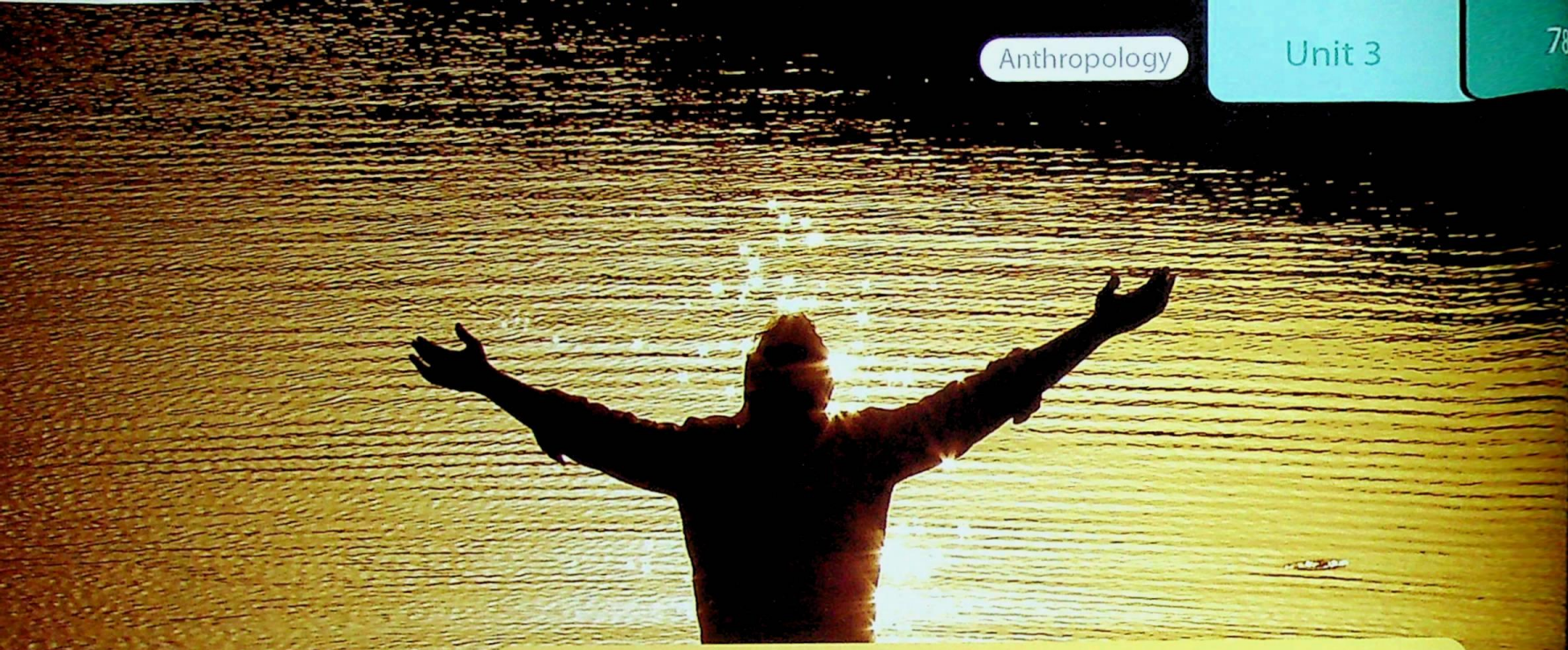
Before you read the opinions of scholars, give your own view on what the differences are between animals and humans.

Pillars of Wisdom

The Qur'an states: "And do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls. It is they who are the transgressors." (59:19)

The Messenger of God (s) stated: "Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 2, p. 32)

Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) stated: "Self-knowledge is the most useful knowledge." (*Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p. 712). He also stated: "I wonder at a person who is in search of something he has lost, but who has lost himself and does not search." (*Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p. 460)



The Criterion for Being Human

Humans and animals have many things in common, yet there is a series of basic distinctions which distinguish humans from other animals. The commonalities between humans and animals and the things that distinguish humans from animals have caused man to live a life with two aspects: an animal life and a human life, or in other words, a material life and a cultural and spiritual life. Humans, also like other animals, has a set of wants and desires and, in the light of his own knowledge and understandings, exerts efforts to satisfy those wants and desires. His difference with other animals is in the scope and depth of his knowledge and understanding, as well as in the sublime level of his wants and desires. It is this that has given humans an advantage and excellence and has separated him from the other animals.

The knowledge that animals have of the world is only obtained through the outward senses; it is for this reason that it is superficial and individual and does not have generality and universality. The knowledge of the animal, in contrast to humans, is regional, meaning it is limited to the animal's environment and cannot go beyond this. Also, the animal's knowledge is current, meaning it is confined to the present time and cut off from the past and future; an animal has neither knowledge of its own history nor the history of the world and it does not think about, or exert any efforts based on, the future. The animal, in terms of knowledge, never goes beyond the framework of exteriority, individuality and particularity, its environment and the present time. It is imprisoned with these four limitations and if occasionally it goes outside of them, it is not conscientiously and by choice; rather it is forcibly directed by nature - its actions are instinctive and unconscious.

Not only is the knowledge of the animal limited to this framework, the level of its wants and desires are also limited. Firstly, they are restricted to the material:

However, the realm of the human, whether in its knowledge and insight, or whether in its wants and desires, is much more extensive and sublime than that of the animal. Human knowledge and understanding goes beyond the appearances of things and penetrates into their essence and reality and their relationships with other phenomena. It is a knowledge that is not confined to place or time; it is able to encompass places other than the individual's own environment and reaches to the past and future. It discovers human history as well as the world's history, meaning the history of the planet, its mountains, seas, plants and other animals and considers the distant future. More than this, human thought heads towards infinity and eternity and can gain some understanding of them. A human goes beyond individuality and particularity and discovers general rules and general facts about the universe, thus enabling him to gain dominance over nature. From the aspect of his wants and desires, a human can be at a high level; he is a being that pursues values, ideals and perfection. The ideals he reaches to are non-material and are of no benefit to him; they are ideals that are not specific to himself or even to his spouse and children, they are general and inclusive of all of humanity and are not confined to a specific place or time. Now the question is, how can a human, and aided by what means, raise his knowledge and desires to this level of excellence? The answer is the "intellect". In fact, it is because of the intellectual power he possesses that the human is able to understand the nature of things and gain knowledge beyond the limitations of time, space and individuality. The benefit that man gains from the power of the intellect is not found in any other animal or plant and it is with the help of this power that he can understand general facts and rules and become aware of the good and evil of matters. He can, for example, between a choice of something that is good and something that is better, choose that which is better and between a choice of bad and worse, choose that which is bad; in summary, he can conceptualise a noble purpose for his life and move towards it. Of course, there is another means within the human which causes him to have sublime tendencies and desires, and that is called his "nature".

Links

Note that even if an animal were to pursue an aim and move towards a goal which is outside of the limitations mentioned, for example, one which is related to its species and not to the individual, or to the future and not the present - as in seen in some social animals such as the honey bee - it will be unconscious and instinctive, directly steered by the power that created it and manages the world. In lesson 4, pages 111 & 112 the instinct of animals has been discussed in detail.

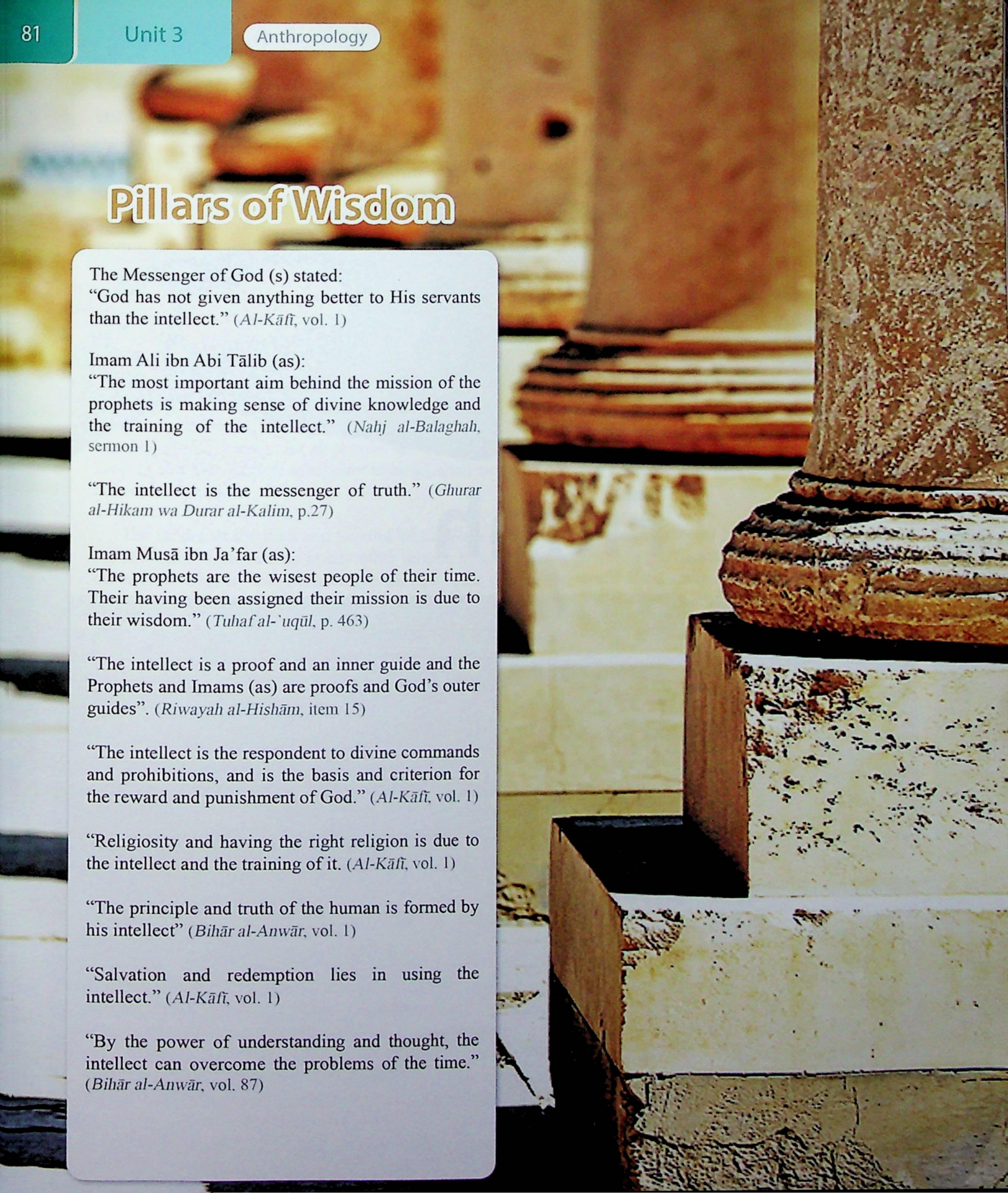
Links

In the religion of Islam, not only is there no conflict between revelation and use of the intellect, in fact the intellect has been employed as a useful tool for religion and in many cases, revelation plays a role in the blossoming of the intellect. In lesson 4, pages 117-119 the intellect and its domain, as well as the interaction between the intellect and religion have been discussed.

The Inner Messenger

It can be said that man has a choice in every moment of his life; some of these choices will have a great effect on his future and destiny, such as the choice of religion and way of living, other choices will have less effect. One tool within the human that helps the person to discern right from wrong and good from evil is the power of the intellect. In fact, the level of success of persons greatly depends on the level of understanding and human effort in taking advantage of this faculty. In the Quran, God, because of this high position and effectiveness of the intellect, greatly encourages humans to contemplate. In Islamic narrations also, thought has not only be introduced as being worship, but actually the best form of worship. The religion of Islam has placed a great deal of emphasis upon the power of reflection because it considers it a tool with which to find the truth. Contemplation is regarded as being in the same category as human nature and revelation. That's why, one of the primary objectives of the divine prophets was to actuate and liberate the minds of humanity. In fact, the degree of success that a person may achieve is dependent on the amount of effort exerted within this faculty and due to the high position and effectiveness of the intellect, God repeatedly encourages individuals to contemplate, in the Holy Qur'an. To spend time pondering is considered as one of the best forms of worship in Islamic narrations.

The intellectual and scientific achievements of today are indebted to the presence of the prophets in the history of humankind.



Pillars of Wisdom

The Messenger of God (s) stated:
"God has not given anything better to His servants than the intellect." (*Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1)

Imam Ali ibn Abi Tālib (as):
"The most important aim behind the mission of the prophets is making sense of divine knowledge and the training of the intellect." (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 1)

"The intellect is the messenger of truth." (*Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p.27)

Imam Musā ibn Ja'far (as):
"The prophets are the wisest people of their time. Their having been assigned their mission is due to their wisdom." (*Tuhaf al-`uqūl*, p. 463)

"The intellect is a proof and an inner guide and the Prophets and Imams (as) are proofs and God's outer guides". (*Riwayah al-Hishām*, item 15)

"The intellect is the respondent to divine commands and prohibitions, and is the basis and criterion for the reward and punishment of God." (*Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1)

"Religiosity and having the right religion is due to the intellect and the training of it. (*Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1)

"The principle and truth of the human is formed by his intellect" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 1)

"Salvation and redemption lies in using the intellect." (*Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1)

"By the power of understanding and thought, the intellect can overcome the problems of the time." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 87)

Fitrah

Think About

Think about and answer the following question: Of the human characteristics that have been mentioned, which one do you think is the most important distinguishing feature between humans and animals?

Links

For more information on the characteristics of human nature and its tendencies, refer to page 85 of this lesson.

There is no doubt that there are tendencies within the human that do not exist within animals, such as, compassion, creativity, love, worship, etc. From the viewpoint of all monotheistic religions, these characteristics stem from his nature. Due to his divine essence, a person will seek truth and justice, will love beauty and fear evil.

In fact, all of our values are encapsulated within our nature and is one of the distinguishing features of humans and gives them superiority over animals. These innate qualities are holy and not from the realm of the mundane nor natural instincts. For some reason, they are not always manifest within individual and social ethics.

The measure of the humanity of a person is according to the development of his innate values and the criterion for virtue and excellence, is the condition of these human values within him. The reason for their existence is to allow man to attain human perfection.

These divine characteristics, which exist within the human, are in fact beyond the limits of time and place and particularity. Human nature seeks perfection and infinity and desires to attain all perfections in every time and place. Among other features of human nature, is the desire for beauty and love, which lays the ground for altruism and the helping of other humans, animals and plants. In other words, since animals do not understand the desires of humans and do not desire them, the human nature can be regarded as one of the most important distinction between humans and animals.

Human Value

…Whoever saves a life is as though he saved all mankind. (5:32)

The below sentences are found within the opening sentences of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Now, therefore the General Assembly proclaims This Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms…"

The failure of the First and Second World Wars in the twentieth century showed how important the issue of human rights is, more than at any other time in history. The preamble of the United Nations Charter and thirty different articles lay emphasis on human rights, the dignity and worth of the human, equality of rights between men and women, equality of large and small nations, and so on. Human value is great and these rights should be considered. All humans should declare with the loudest voice that the value and respect of the human is so great that no person or thing should cause him/her to be humiliated or treated like an animal/sub-human.

Indeed, what is the meaning of human dignity? Why does the Charter of Human Rights state: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world?" What is this dignity of the human that is introduced as his first integral right? It is apparent from looking at the world today that the value of these sentences has not been given due regard and they have remained only words.

Progress Tracking

The content of the United Nations Charter is simply a confirmation that all people possess human dignity and demand justice and respect for their rights and others. However, a noteworthy point is that the main cause for the many faults and shortcomings which exist in the implementation of the provisions of this charter lies in how to define and identify the rights of humans, animals, trees and other beings and this has also led to many sharp divisions, conflicts and wars (even after the drafting of this charter). According to the provisions of this charter, no one denies that justice is good, but that which is causing problems in the world is the lack of proper foundations that determine the rights and position of each individual in society: the separation from divine teachings and principles, which have explained the rights of all animals separately and in different situations, has been the main cause of the major problems in societies.

Reference

Have you ever heard of Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjād's (as) *Treatise on Rights*? Refer to this book and study the rights that Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjād considered as human rights: www.pureislam.org

Divine Religions and Human Dignity

Examiner's Tip

What is the difference between inherent dignity and acquired dignity? In answer to this question, you may provide your own explanation, but you should be able to give a criterion for the difference between these two forms of dignity.

Activity

Write your understanding of human dignity in 300-400 words. Give examples of human rights and then mention examples of violations of these rights.

Human history clearly shows that the divine prophets had been the first proclaimers of the fundamental rights and freedom of the human who regarded them as the will of God. Although some of the Western scholars claim that they originated human rights, dignity and freedom; however with a brief look at the existing laws in the divine religions, especially Islam, it will be understood that moral values and the protection of dignity have a long history within societies.

The concept of human rights in the divine religions is based on monotheistic principles, such as freedom, equality, brotherhood, peace, security, fulfilling obligations, respect for individual and social rights, unlike other approaches which are based on humanism. From the perspective of the revealed religions, absolute sovereignty over the world and humanity belongs to God and the aim of creation is the perfection of man in both of his dimensions, material and spiritual, this is while man's attention is focused on the Originator of Creation. These religions regard human rights as necessary for the dignity of man. Principles such as freedom, equality, brotherhood, peace, security, fulfilling obligations, respect for individual and social rights and the rights of women, children and refugees are among the basic principles of monotheistic religions.

Islam, as the last divine religion, places great emphasis on dignity and regards the human as worthy of being the representative of God. According to Islamic belief, God breathed His spirit in man and commanded the angels to prostrate before him. God gave the precious gift of dignity to man, declaring: "Certainly We have honoured the Children of Adam" (17: 70). This status is a source of honor and esteem, which God has given to all humans, religious and non-religious. This type of prestige is an inherent distinction that all humans have an equal share in.

There is another form of nobility in divine religions, which is known as acquired dignity. Humans are able to achieve a higher status than other creatures, even the favored angels, based on their efforts and obedience to the commands of God in respect to the rights of others. God says in the Holy Qur'an, "Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you" (49:13). In fact, humans have received their dignity from God Himself, Who is dignified, and to the extent that a person can be successful in attaining divine morality, they will enjoy more or less of this attribute.

Based on the inherent dignity of the human, God has provided rights for mankind. In today's language, these are referred to as human rights. Some of the rights that have been mentioned in the divine religions are:

Freedom

The first thing that arises from human dignity is freedom of belief and choice. If a human is forced to accept a belief, even a correct belief, his dignity has been suppressed and his human personality has been offended, and in the view of Islam, this belief which has not been achieved through free choice, is lacking in value and validity. In the view of Islam, all humans have been created free and have the right to live freely.

There are various types of freedoms; we will mention three of them briefly:

1) Human free will: is tied to the freedom of thought. Since the human essence possesses free will it can choose the direction of its actions.

2) Social freedom: is the freedom of a person from the constraints and captivity of others. Here a person gains his social freedom from others; who are not supposed to act as obstacles on the way of his development, confine him or block his activities, exploit him or enslave him, meaning that they do not use all of his physical and mental faculties for their own benefit. The lack of this type of freedom has been a problem for humanity throughout its history and one of the general aims of the prophets has been the provision of social freedom and the combatting of different forms of slavery.

3) Spiritual freedom: means that a person is free within himself and is not a servant and slave of sensual desires or passions that will lead him to worldliness. Therefore, this freedom is even more valuable and sacred than social freedom because the person is free from the constraints and captivity of himself. Spiritual freedom can only be achieved through faith and divine teachings. Faith and piety free a person from bondage and slavery to their desires and removes the rope of greed, lust, envy and resentment from their necks, and thus destroys the roots of rivalry and social slavery. Persons who are not slaves to wealth and position will also never become affected by rivalry or subjected to social slavery.

Reference

To further your understanding of the concept of freedom, especially the discussion on spiritual freedom, refer to the book "*Spiritual Discourses*" by Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari, as well as "*Freedom, The Unstated Facts and Points*" by Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi. You can view these books at the below addresses: www.pureislam.org

Security

Islam invites its followers to peace and reconciliation in social life and warns against following provocateurs and those who have gone astray. Islam condemns all terrorist acts and any killing of innocents at any place; however legitimate defense against aggression is considered a necessity of life and Islam supports struggles of liberation by oppressed nations.

Activity

Refer to verses (49: 9-10) and find out the Qur'anic view on peace and security.

Equality

In Islam, all humans enjoy a set of equal and basic human rights that are essential to humanity and human dignity. Islam negates any discrimination arising from differences in colour or language. The Prophet (s) stated: The Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab nor the non-Arab over the Arab, and the white has no superiority over the black, nor the black over the white; except in virtue. In Islam, all people are equal in their ability to become close to God and achieve prosperity. Woman, man, old, and young: all Muslims, even the Prophet, are equal in their divine and social duties, and all human beings are equal in terms of social rights.

Emancipation of Slaves

Have you ever studied the history of slavery in the West? Have you heard of the massacres of Native Americans and the forced labour of Black people and the denial of their basic human rights?

In 1860, the population of African slaves in the United States had grown to four million. The presidential election of 1860 and the victory of Abraham Lincoln, as someone who opposed the expansion of slavery in the West, was a turning point in the anti-slavery movement in America.

The emancipation of slaves and the fight against this evil started twelve centuries earlier in a peaceful manner by the religion of Islam.

Before the emergence of Islam in Arabia, slavery, as in other lands, had been very common and, unfortunately, history has witnessed the most brutal and cruel treatment of slaves. However, after the coming of Islam the measure of virtue and humanity shifted from ethnicity and wealth to piety, worship and morality. It is obvious that a religion that holds that the only criterion for being better than others is a person's level of piety and that devotion and reverence are especially for God, cannot tolerate for even a day people being enslaved to others. Thus, one of the unforgivable sins in Islam is the denial of liberty to humans and the turning of them into commodities.

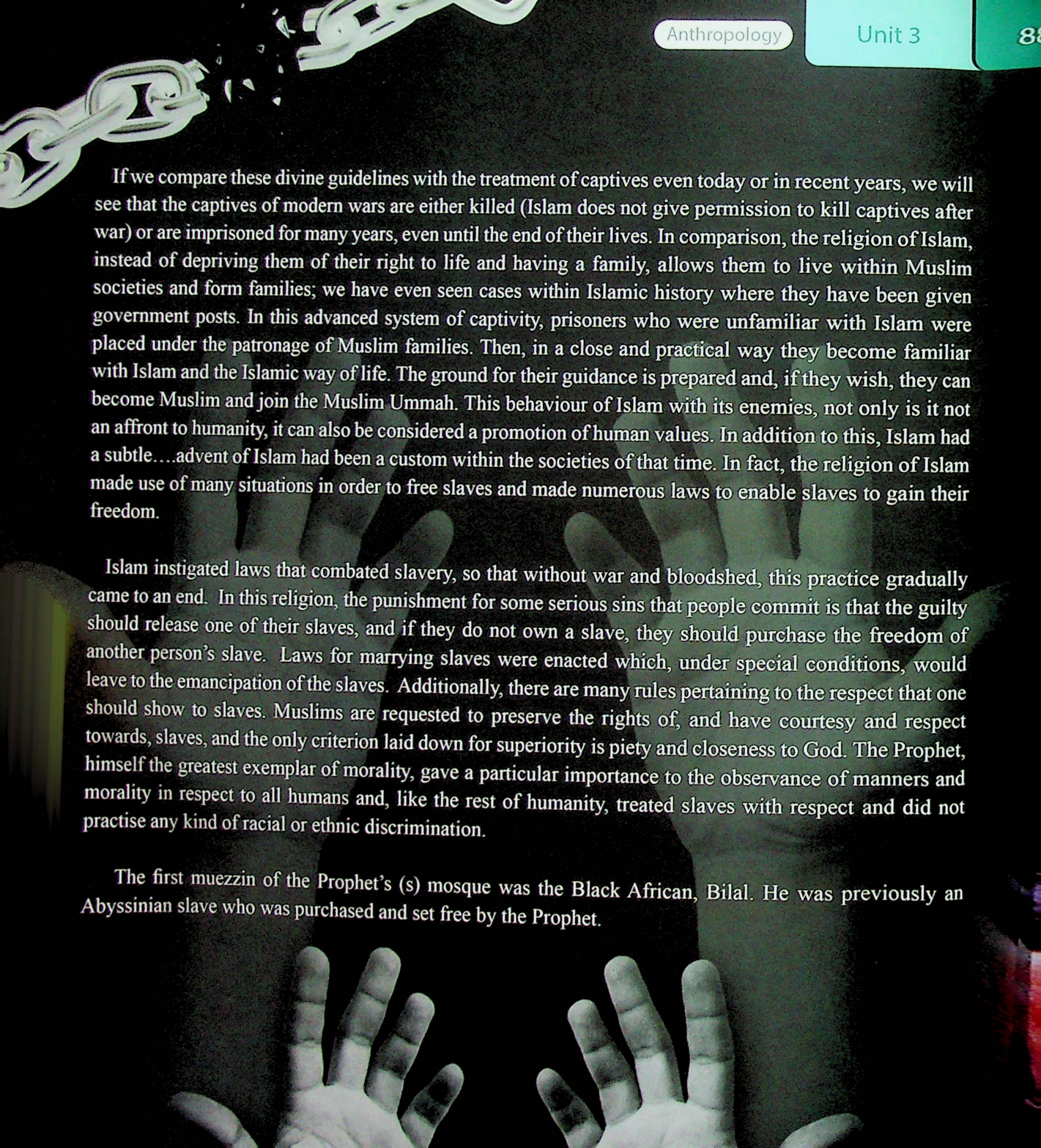
Some people, ignorant of Islam and its laws, have imagined that captives who were captured in war by Muslims were dealt with in the same inhumane manner that was usual in the treatment of slaves in the West. However the fact of the matter and what history clearly shows is that when persons who joined in battles against the Muslims and who had the intention to overthrow the Islamic system and kill Muslims were captured, Islam gave the leader of the Muslim society four ways to deal with them:

a) Free those from whom compensation has been received
b) Exchange them for Muslim prisoners
c) Free those who have performed actions such as teaching reading and writing to the Muslims
d) In cases where the previous ways are not in the best interest or not possible, rather than kill them, to use them in service of the Muslims.

If we compare these divine guidelines with the treatment of captives even today or in recent years, we will see that the captives of modern wars are either killed (Islam does not give permission to kill captives after war) or are imprisoned for many years, even until the end of their lives. In comparison, the religion of Islam, instead of depriving them of their right to life and having a family, allows them to live within Muslim societies and form families; we have even seen cases within Islamic history where they have been given government posts. In this advanced system of captivity, prisoners who were unfamiliar with Islam were placed under the patronage of Muslim families. Then, in a close and practical way they become familiar with Islam and the Islamic way of life. The ground for their guidance is prepared and, if they wish, they can become Muslim and join the Muslim Ummah. This behaviour of Islam with its enemies, not only is it not an affront to humanity, it can also be considered a promotion of human values. In addition to this, Islam had a subtle….advent of Islam had been a custom within the societies of that time. In fact, the religion of Islam made use of many situations in order to free slaves and made numerous laws to enable slaves to gain their freedom.

Islam instigated laws that combated slavery, so that without war and bloodshed, this practice gradually came to an end. In this religion, the punishment for some serious sins that people commit is that the guilty should release one of their slaves, and if they do not own a slave, they should purchase the freedom of another person's slave. Laws for marrying slaves were enacted which, under special conditions, would leave to the emancipation of the slaves. Additionally, there are many rules pertaining to the respect that one should show to slaves. Muslims are requested to preserve the rights of, and have courtesy and respect towards, slaves, and the only criterion laid down for superiority is piety and closeness to God. The Prophet, himself the greatest exemplar of morality, gave a particular importance to the observance of manners and morality in respect to all humans and, like the rest of humanity, treated slaves with respect and did not practise any kind of racial or ethnic discrimination.

The first muezzin of the Prophet's (s) mosque was the Black African, Bilal. He was previously an Abyssinian slave who was purchased and set free by the Prophet.



Ban on Abortion

Today we are facing the news about the rising levels of abortion in some countries. The issue is not over babies that, due to compelling medical reasons, should be aborted. It is about babies, who despite their mother being healthy, are being denied their right to life.

Among all pregnancies in the United States, twenty-two percent terminate in abortion (i.e. more than one in five). From 1973 (the beginning of legal abortion in the United States) until 2005, over 45 million legal abortions have been performed in this country. It should be added to these terrible statistics that each year around the world, between 42 million and 70 million abortions take place. This means that the theoretical justification for abortion is a cause for sustaining a horrific genocide around the world. This is while 93 percent of all abortions are carried out at the request of the parents (particularly the mother), without any medical reason.

Indeed, the question arises in the minds of all people: why are these babies being killed? The hearts of these people suffer from the killing of these babies and they are reminded of the periods of ignorance in history. The Holy Qur'an, with reverence for the human being from the beginning of creation and development of the foetus, to birth and thereafter until death, has established the most valuable social laws for humans, which include the protection of the foetus and the need to uphold its sanctity and human dignity. According to the Qur'an, all human beings, even the foetus, are equal to each other in the principles of "human dignity" and the "right to life".

The Holy Quran has severely condemned the killing of humans, whether it is those who have not yet been born and are in their mother's womb, or those who have been born. Take notice of the following verses:

"Do not kill your children for the fear of penury: We will provide for them and for you. Killing them is indeed a great iniquity." (17:31)

"Say, 'Come, I will recount what your Lord has forbidden you from. That you shall not ascribe any partners to Him, and you shall be good to the parents, you shall not kill your children due to penury —We will provide for you and for them— you shall not approach indecencies, the outward among them and the inward ones, and you shall not kill a soul [whose life] Allah has made inviolable, except with due cause. This is what He has enjoined upon you so that you may apply reason." (6:151)

"That is why We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, without [its being guilty of] manslaughter or corruption on the earth, is as though he had killed all mankind, and whoever saves a life is as though he had saved all mankind. Our apostles certainly brought them manifest signs, yet even after that many of them commit excesses on the earth." (5:32)

Human dignity and right to life are the source of all other human rights. If this principle is ignored, then all rights will be ignored. Therefore, the Qur'an considers the killing of an innocent human being equal to the killing all human beings. From the words of the Prophet (s) we learn that "If all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth were involved in the shedding of Muslim blood, and gave consent to it, God would throw them all into hell."

This respectful approach to the human being, and consequently the foetus governs over all ethical principles. Therefore by complying with the principle of the inherent dignity of the human and preserving the sanctity of his life, the taking of any human life, at any age or circumstance, will not occur. Hence the religion of Islam does not permit abortions except in a case where the mother's life is in danger, and even blood money (al-dīya) has been considered in regards to the lifeless body of the foetus. A notable point is that even if the foetus be illegitimate, Islam still does not permit its abortion. This shows the depth of consideration of divine religions towards human rights and human

Mysterious Tendencies

Humans and animals have common tendencies which are called instincts. Instincts are innate qualities that are not acquired and enable animals and humans to fulfill their needs, such as obtaining food, self-defence and generally guide both creatures in the continuation of its life.

Are human tendencies limited to instinctive desires? Are the sentiments of humans similar to animals? Do attributes such as the seeking of justice and truth, the tendency to praise and worship, the giving of help and respect to fellow human beings, forgiveness and sacrifice, exist within animals? Have you ever seen a lion go hunting and then divide up its kill between weaker animals? Have you ever seen a strong animal, for the sake of justice, go to help a weak animal against a stronger animal? There is no doubt, within the human, tendencies and sentiments exist which do not exist in other creatures. So, where do these sentiments come from?

If these sentiments result from human intelligence, then whoever is more intelligent will be more kind, more just and more self-sacrificing. In fact, it is not like this: sometimes people who are more intelligent have worse morals and are more unjust. Therefore, these sentiments do not result from human intelligence.

Human nature has a set of tendencies which leads man towards perfection and goodness. In the second lesson we learned that the human characteristic that results in these tendencies is having the knowledge of God, also interpreted as divine nature. We will examine the tendencies that arise from this nature.

The View of Divine Religions towards Human Tendencies

In the Holy Qur'an, we read:

> So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind (30: 30)

Just as a power has been deposited within animals which guides them in the manner of eating, of defending themselves and of reproducing, humans, in addition to this power, have another power which the Holy Qur'an has termed 'nature' (fitrah). This Divine nature guides the human towards perfection in his life: a life in which material and spiritual aspects have been mixed together. This nature was placed within the human by his creator and is unchangeable, and it is for this reason that humans share common permanent characteristics. The tendency towards beauty and love and the tendency to dislike falsehood, oppression, injustice, etc. are all common tendencies among humans which collectively are called his 'nature'.

These tendencies do not lie within the body of a human; rather they lie within his soul and consciously or unconsciously lead him towards perfection. The nature of the human is within his essence and will not be separated from him. However, because the human has the tendency towards beauty and perfection, he sometimes tends towards limited and transitory beauties and perfections and remains ignorant of higher beauties and perfections. Sometimes realities lead him to a place where absolute truth will not be found but in his mind he imagines himself to be heading in the direction of truth.

The Divine Prophets and heavenly religions have the aim of freeing man from the prison of mental delusions and lead him towards the highest perfection, though because he does not correctly realise his own capacities, he has claimed that beauty and perfection lie in another place. Sometimes he turns to his divine conscience and his nature but attachment to the beauties and perfections of this world act as an obstacle to him reaching greater and everlasting beauties.

Religion, as a way of life has been established according to human creation....however, humans with a way of life that has been established based on experience and benefit, want to counter religion and live in an incorrect manner. Accordingly, material benefit has been placed as the means to achieve worldly perfections such as beauty, prosperity and pleasure and man has reasoned that spiritual beauties do not exist. This is despite him praising spiritual beauties within himself such as self-sacrifice, justice, love and thanksgiving to the Creator. In this struggle between the conscience and attachment to material beauties, it is possible that many people will ignore spiritual beauties and pursue a prosperous material life, desiring more enjoyment and comfort, even sacrificing justice and moral principles in the process.

Think About !

Compare the tendencies that exist with you with the instinctive desires of animals. What other tendencies do you possess which animals do not possess?

Case Study

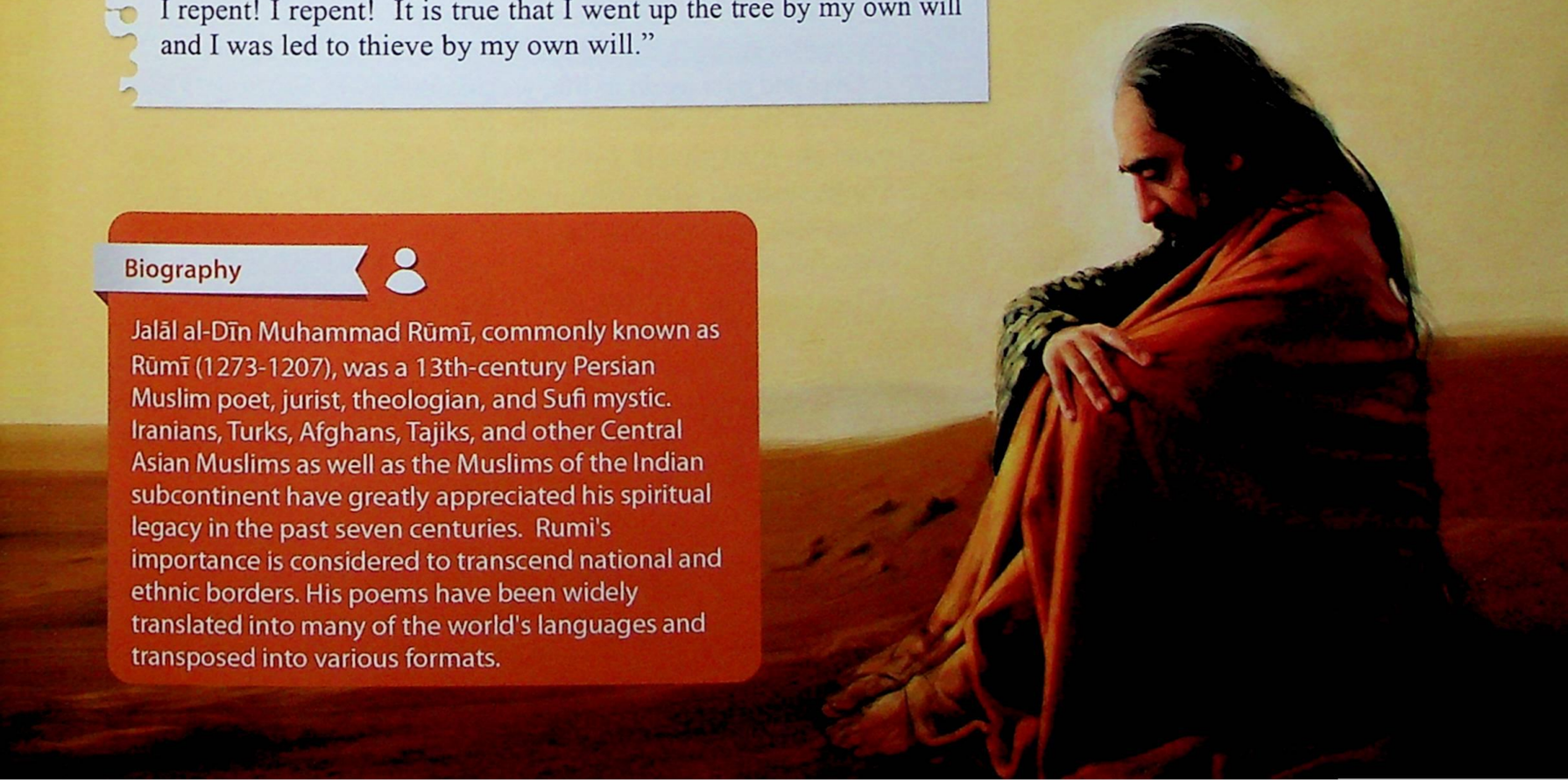
An Interesting Story

Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī told this story in poetic language in his book, *the Mathnavī*:

"Fresh and ripe cherries! He wanted to pass by and not look. But, he was not able to. He climbed to the top of the tree and began eating. How tasty! He looked down. A man stood in wonder and was looking up at him. It was the owner of the garden. He called up to him: What are you doing up the tree? Are you not ashamed?! Theft in broad daylight! While busily eating the sweet cherries, he answered: Theft? This is not theft. I am a servant of God and this garden belongs to God. Also, its fruits have been given by God. What problem is there in a servant of God eating from the fruits of God's garden? What theft?

The owner of the garden, upon hearing this, brought the man down from the tree and tied him to its trunk with rope. Then he got a stick and beat the man with it. The man, weeping, called out: This is unjust! Why are you hitting me? Are you not ashamed from God? The owner of the garden answered: This stick belongs to God. Your body is a creation of God. Also, I am a servant of God and the stick that I am hitting you with belongs to God. Where is the problem?

After being beaten, the man realised his mistake. He shouted out: I repent! I repent! It is true that I went up the tree by my own will and I was led to thieve by my own will."



Biography

Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, commonly known as Rūmī (1273-1207), was a 13th-century Persian Muslim poet, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic. Iranians, Turks, Afghans, Tajiks, and other Central Asian Muslims as well as the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy in the past seven centuries. Rumi's importance is considered to transcend national and ethnic borders. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats.

What is my Future?

We humans, in every moment of our lives, have choices. These choices are related to the most simple to the most complicated matters in life: from choosing the colours of clothes and time of waking, studying and playing, to choosing the way in which we will live our lives.

It is these choices that distinguish humans from other creatures. Other creatures can make choices: consider a lion that is sitting in ambush of several deer. It then selects one and attacks it. However, the scope of choice of an animal is limited to its instincts and it chooses things that do not cause harm. This is because the tendencies of the animal are natural and material tendencies: it chooses whatever is more beneficial to it. It selects its prey according to which is more delicious and performs actions which do not endanger its life.

The human, however, as has been indicated possesses two kinds of tendencies: instinctive tendencies and tendencies related to its nature. Instinctive tendencies are connected to man's material aspect and tendencies related to his nature are connected to his material aspect. Sometimes these two tendencies contradict one another. When you are hungry and you only have enough food for one person and you see another person who is in need of food, your instinct tells you to eat the food; at the same time your nature tells you to give some of the food to the needy person, even though by giving some of the food you will not be completely full. But, is there such a choice among animals? Would animals give preference to spiritual considerations over material desires?

Over and over again in life, we find ourselves confronted with a puzzling range of choices. The first question that comes to our mind is: What should I do? And, which way should I choose? Words such as: what, why, and how, show well our choices and willpower. Between material and spiritual tendencies, all humans have the power to choose the best and most equitable option. These two tendencies in the human have caused him to be an autonomous being which plans its own future. Accordingly, all humans must gather information to make the best choices because he will in future be responsible for those decisions.

Progress Tracking

It is possible that after you decide to perform an action, you are not successful in it. This does not mean that the human lacks free will; rather it means that one of the factors required for the action to occur was not present. For example, when you press a light switch, if there is no electricity in your home, the light will not come on. However, the important point in the discussion of free will is that pressing the switch was in your control and no one forced you to do so.

The Extent of Human Choice

One of the important issues in relation to humans is free will and determinism. Man has always thought about whether he is free in his actions or is compelled. Can he perform any action he wills or is there another will at work which leads him to whatever it has decreed for him? This matter has continuously engaged the minds of philosophers and religious scholars.

God, who is the master over all of us, has willed humans to perform actions within their power based on their own volition; if, for example, for the realization of one event, a number of conditions and causes are necessary, one of those causes might be under the control of humans. For example, in order to turn on a light, all necessary equipment must be available and in working order, such as: a switch, wire, bulb, connection of the wire to a power supply, flow of electricity through the wire, etc. Now, one of the causes for the light turning on is the pressing of the switch by a person. In this example, the person pressing the switch is free in his action, i.e. he can press the switch or not press the switch. In fact, before doing anything, the human intellect considers whether an action is useful or non-useful; if the intellect considers an action to be useful, the person gains enthusiasm to perform that action and his will is employed to execute it by way of his limbs and organs.

Thus, it is clear that many factors have to be in place for an action to be performed. Among them, human will is one of the factors, and is in reality, the final cause. In other words, everything has been provided to enable humans to achieve their goals and only the human's will and power determines whether or not their goal is achieved!

Knowledge of God and Free Will

When we consider the attributes of God and understanding that He is the Knower of the Unseen and is All-Aware of everything, it is clear that He would know what actions humans will perform. Some people say that because God knows which actions we will perform, therefore it is clear that He has compelled us to perform those actions! In answer, it should be said that today's scientists predict what events will happen in the future and weather forecasters tell us tomorrow's weather. Should we then say that weather forecasters are the cause for the next day's weather? Is this at all reasonable? Due to His complete knowledge, God is certainly aware of the future of humans, yet at the same time, people with their free will, influence their destinies. In your opinion, if a teacher makes use of the experience and knowledge of his students that he has and says, for example, that student of mine will fail his exam at the end of the year, is it in the teacher's power to compel that student not to succeed? Can it be said to the teacher that she made the student flunk because he knew in advance that the student would not pass? Certainly, the answer to these questions is negative. By considering these examples, it can be understood that the knowledge God has of us and our circumstances has no interference with our free will and thus we are able to make decisions in our lives.

Al-Qaḍā and Al-Qadar

Examiner's Tip

You should be able to give the meanings of al-qada and al-qadr, illustrated by examples.

When we start the selection process for marriage, we have the right to choose among the available candidates. It is the couple that decide who they will marry. However, after the marriage ceremony, the responsibility for this relationship is lays with the couple and there are rules which apply to this union. After exercising free will in choosing, we have constraints associated with our choice. In simple language: "We are constrained by our previous choices."

. On the one hand there is the matter of divine destiny and on the other hand there is human free will. This means that God has provided humans with their own will to select one of the ways available. That which people select with their will is the same as what is predestined. God has decreed that people should perform actions based on their own free will and not to be compelled. The ultimate destiny of man is formed by the actions that he himself has chosen.

In other words, the human does not only have one destiny available to him; rather he has various destinies in front of him, each of which could be the one that is realised. For example, if someone gets sick and then is treated and survives, this is his destiny. Also, if he is not treated and remains ill, or dies, this is also his destiny. It is possible that each of two destinies is an outcome of his choices.

Think About

In your opinion, if the destiny of a person was predetermined and they did not have a role in their future, would the resurrection have any meaning? This means that all oppressors would have been compelled to oppress and all people performing good deeds would have been compelled to do so.

Progress Tracking

The early Muslims, inspired by the source of revelation, had understood the issues of al-qaḍā and al-qadar such that they would never see them as opposed to the freedom of man to choose his own destiny. It was recorded in the Muslim conquests that when the second caliph arrived to Syria, a report suddenly came to him that there has been an outbreak of cholera in Syria. The caliph's companions recommended to him that he return the same way he came; his opinion was the same. Then, one of the people who had been listening complained to the caliph: are you not escaping divine fate? The caliph replied to the person who was objecting: I, by the command of God, am escaping one fate for another fate! Another person who was present, in emphasizing the caliph's words, said: I heard from the Prophet (s) that he stated: If, in any place that the plague appears, you have not been in that place, do not enter it, and if the plague appears in any place that you are in, do not leave that place, lest you be an agent for its transmission to others!

It is clear from what we have said that belief in al-qada and al-qadar is not a reason for the negation of free will and the issue of al-qadā and al-qadar is very distant from that of determinism; if some suppose that belief in al-qadā and al-qadar results in determinism, this is due to their own ignorance of the sublime teachings of Islam.

Al-Qaḍā and Al-Qadar

What are al-qaḍā and al-qadar? What meaning do these two words have?

Imagine that in order to reach your destination, there are several ways to choose from. These ways are equivalent to al-qaḍā. The way that you choose is called al-qadar.

Unfortunately, due to the incorrect interpretation of some people, many individuals lack the correct understanding of these two terms. Many people become worried and assume that divine decree is an agent outside of their environment which has a direct effect on human will; sometimes it may seem to be a positive agent that compels people to perform an action and sometimes it has a negative aspect and prevents a person, willingly or unwillingly, from performing an action. Many people, have attributed the natural causes for the occurrence of some events to divine destiny, or have blamed their inactiveness or bad deeds on divine will. Al-qaḍā and al-qadar with this meaning are no more than a myth. However, the reality of al-qaḍā and al-qadar should be sought within our surroundings and should never be imagined to be anything other than related to man and his will. The fact is that divine destiny does not impose itself on the will of man and it is man's own informed or ignorant choices that shape his future. Al-qaḍā and al-qadar are actually crystallized within the divine laws. Below are examples of divine laws and the way they are related to human will:

1 – Divine destiny in relation to a nation whose people are lazy and who do not work, who dispute and quarrel with each other, who waste their God-given power by using it in the wrong ways, who are unaware of time and their environment, and who, due to being absorbed in self-interest, are blind to the situation of their fellow humans, would mean that, sooner or later, it would split apart.

However, divine destiny in relation to a nation that works to help the poor, and, by reducing the gap between the classes, enables them to enjoy a decent life worthy of a human being, and observes their rights to some of the wealth of the rich - in summary, a caring and righteous nation – will mean that it will always enjoy stability, tranquillity, progress, mobility and development. These two different destinies are so clear and visible that no one is in doubt.

All the nations of the world are equal in their ability to choose between these two destinies and there is no external agent to compel their will to choose either. It is we who, based on selfishness or reason, choose our destiny. In any case, the destiny that we choose will be divine destiny as it is He who created for us these choices and made us free to choose between them.

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, what adverse impact could the misinterpretation of the meaning of al-qaḍā and al-qadar have on the fate of people? Given that, the tendency to believe in determinism is present within some nations, have you ever heard of cases where the rulers have taken advantage of the people with the incorrect understanding of destiny? Share your opinions with your classmates.

Al-Qadā and Al-Q

2 – A youth who begins his life with perseverance, an iron will and a sound understanding and intellect has two destinies waiting for him, both sanctioned by God. Whenever he employs his material and mental capabilities to acquire knowledge or engage in business, he will be building a healthy and happy life for himself; however, whenever he misuses his material and intellectual assets and engages in drinking and gambling and other destructive behaviours that waste his life, after a while his body will definitely become weak and ill and he will end his life in suffering. Both destinies are related to God, though the youth is free in his choice of each one and the result of his choice will be divine destiny. If a person (returns back half way - what do you mean?) way after his choice, his destiny can be replaced with another; this action will be performed under his consent and will be in accordance with divine destiny. This is because He has created us and has allowed us to change course mid-stream in order to replace one destiny with another.

In short, the God who created us, gives us life and guides us to the right way is the same God who created us in a way that we can freely choose between the various choices before us; whatever choice we make will be divine destiny. So, if we look at someone's action from the aspect that it was performed under their own free will, this will demonstrate the freedom of choice that humans have and if we look at the same action having in mind that God gives life to man and anything a person has is from God, then we will say that this is divine destiny. The only thing that should be considered is that God has created man to be free and to be able to choose. Divine destiny has never been in conflict with human freewill and therefore reward and punishment are attributable to human actions.

Progress Tracking

In this section, only a brief explanation about the meaning of fate and how it does not conflict with the freedom of man was given. However, it is noteworthy that this same meaning of fate is also true for non-humans. For example, all events that occur in nature, such as the growth of trees and animals, the falling of rain and snow, and floods and earthquakes, have taken place by the power of God; God has knowledge of all of them and directs them towards their perfection. The only difference between these phenomena and the actions of humans is that in their actions, humans have complete freedom, but non-humans lack this freedom and all events are in accordance with the laws of nature and occur by the will and direction of the Lord of the universe.

Divine Justice

We notice that people have differences in their eating, drinking and study habits and on the other hand, their physical statures, skin color, attractiveness, etc. The first group are behaviours and these are directly related to the will of people and are subject to commands and prohibitions, praise and criticism. The second group, however, are not subject to any of these. It is simple to understand why each group entails a different reaction.

It is correct that a human has will power and nothing, in normal circumstances, is able to compel him to do an action; however a question arises, because a person who is in a favorable situation with access to material goods, lives in a pleasant environment, raised by loving family and recourse to a proper education is in a better position to make decisions about his future and create a better destiny for himself. At the same time, a person who grows up in a deprived area, far from proper resources, is not in the same position.

We should remember that God is just and in the Qur'an He has provided the answer to this question:

لا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَ عَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

"Allah does not task any soul beyond its capacity. Whatever [good] it earns is to its benefit, and whatever [evil] it incurs is to its harm." (2: 286)

The view of the religion of Islam on the issue of justice and injustice is that although some in this world live in better conditions than others, but what is actually important is that all humans in this world are undergoing various divine tests and the harvest of what is sown in this world is reaped in the next world. In reality, the difficulties and struggles that a human experiences are tests and if a person passes them by avoiding bad behaviours and obeying the commands of God, his patience and actions will be rewarded in the afterlife. Certainly, someone who, in this world lived in ease and comfort, will not receive any reward for patience in the face of difficulties.

Links Refer back to Unit 2 and review God's attribute of justice.

Activity

By considering the below narrations, explain in 150-200 words how the freedom of humans can be proved and what relationship there is between divine justice and human freedom.

- Faḍl ibn Sahl asked Imam Ali ibn Mūsā al-Riḍa (as): "Are humans compelled in their actions?" The Imam (as) aswered: "God is more just than to compel his creatures and then to punish them."

- Imam Sādiq (as) was asked in regard to determinism and delegation and in reply he stated: "There is neither determinism nor delegation; rather there is something between these two." The questioner then asked: "What is that thing between these two?" The Imam (as) answered: "As an example, you see a man who commits sin and you then try to prevent him from doing so. He does not accept and so you leave him alone to further commit sin. Because he ignored your restraining of him and so you left him to continue, we should not conclude that you forced him to commit sin."

Note that those who believe in determinism say that humans are compelled in all their actions and have no options, and believers in delegation say that after creating humans, God left humans to themselves and has no involvement in their actions. The truth, supported by the intellect and by narrations, is that humans have been created free, but all their actions, like humans themselves, are dependent on God. Hence, that same God who created humans also gave them, and gives them, will and the power to act so that they can perform their own actions (whether good or bad).

Case Study

A Real Story

The plane was ready to take off. The passengers carried their luggage into the airplane. Smiling, White-skinned attendants directed them towards their allocated seats.

A Black-skinned man entered. He was solemn and sedate. The female attendant guided him towards his seat with perfect politeness. The man sat. After a short time, a White-skinned woman in her fifties entered and the flight attendant, with the same grace, directed her towards her seat, which happened to be beside the Black-skinned man.

The woman sat with reluctance. She shifted around in her seat a little and gave an arrogant look at the black-skinned man and then looked away. Black-skinned man was a little upset at this but did not express what he felt inside. He smiled and did not say anything.

The woman could not tolerate it anymore and called the attendant to tell her of her problem. She complained that she had been seated next to a person from a low and hated group. The attendant looked perplexed. She thought for a while how she could resolve this problem. She did not have the authority to move people's places and so she asked the woman to be patient while she went and spoke with her supervisor.

Some time passed. The woman still upset, sat with her back to the man; she looked like she was a queen who had been sat next to a slave. The other puzzled passengers were witnessing this event but did not know what would be its outcome.

The attendant came back smiling: a solution had been found. She looked at the woman and said "Unfortunately there is no empty place in this section. However, in First Class there is an empty space. Even though until now we have not allowed somebody to move for this reason, because we do not want to force someone to sit next to someone they detest, my supervisor gave permission for us to request this man to move to First Class so that you can be at ease."

The man got up from his place, took his hand-luggage and went to First Class. The pride that was shown on the face of the woman a few moments before gave way to surprise and humiliation. The arrogant woman had never experienced such humiliation.

The other passengers, who had been watching the happenings to see its conclusion, excitedly rose from their places and gave a long clap to the attendant.

Discussion Activity

Relate stories or memories of discrimination to your classmates. Discuss the negative effects of discrimination. In your opinion, what effect does discrimination have in creating social problems such as poverty and corruption?

What is discrimination?

There are obvious differences among members of the human family, not only between races, which have their own unique characteristics but individuals within the same family can exhibit a multitude of features, even if they are identical twins. The Holy Qur'an has also affirmed the differences among people:

﴿ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالِمِينَ ﴾

"Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. There are indeed signs in that for those who know." (30: 22)

Discrimination is a phenomenon that all countries of the world are confronted with and have suffered from. Discrimination has not been limited to one person, society or country. Even those nations which espouse democracy, practice some form of discrimination.

Discrimination means giving preference to one individual over another because of individual characteristics such as colour, gender, religion and race, rather than due to the merit of the individual. In other words, discrimination occurs when there are two people with the same abilities but one is given preference because of illogical and irrelevant reasons. For example, between a black-skinned person and a white-skinned person seeking a job, with the same education and experience, the white-skinned person is given preference, or vice versa.

The Distinction between Differences and Discrimination

When you look at the various parts of your body, you will notice that there is no uniformity among your limbs and organs. The eyes and face have a certain beauty and subtlety, while other organs such as the liver and digestive system do not have these aesthetic qualities. Are these differences an example of injustice and discrimination or the essence of justice?

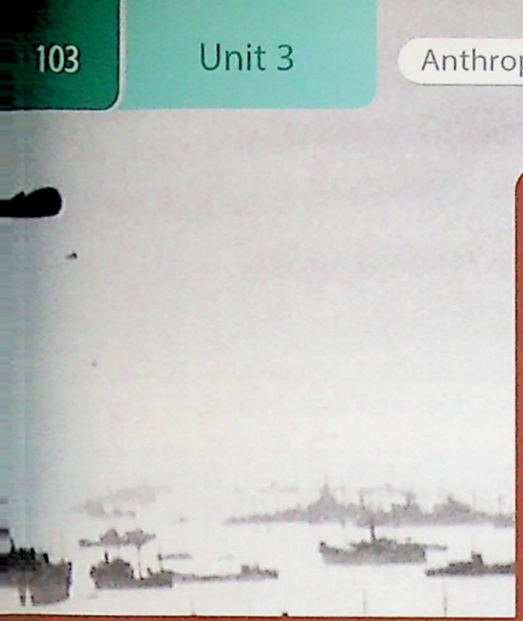
If the gastric juices which exist inside of the stomach were to be sent to the eyes or brain, what would be the result? The eyes and the brain have a particular fragility and are responsible for their own tasks. Therefore, they have been naturally equipped with the liquid which is most suitable for them and the stomach has been supplied with the liquid which is most appropriate for it. If these two liquids were to be interchanged the outcome would be terrible. How would the human being be able to exist? It is unimaginable that all parts of the body could be identical and perform the same tasks.

We conclude that there are differences within the human body but there is no discrimination! The world of nature is the same, whereby phenomena that exist within it have variations between them, each one having its own place.

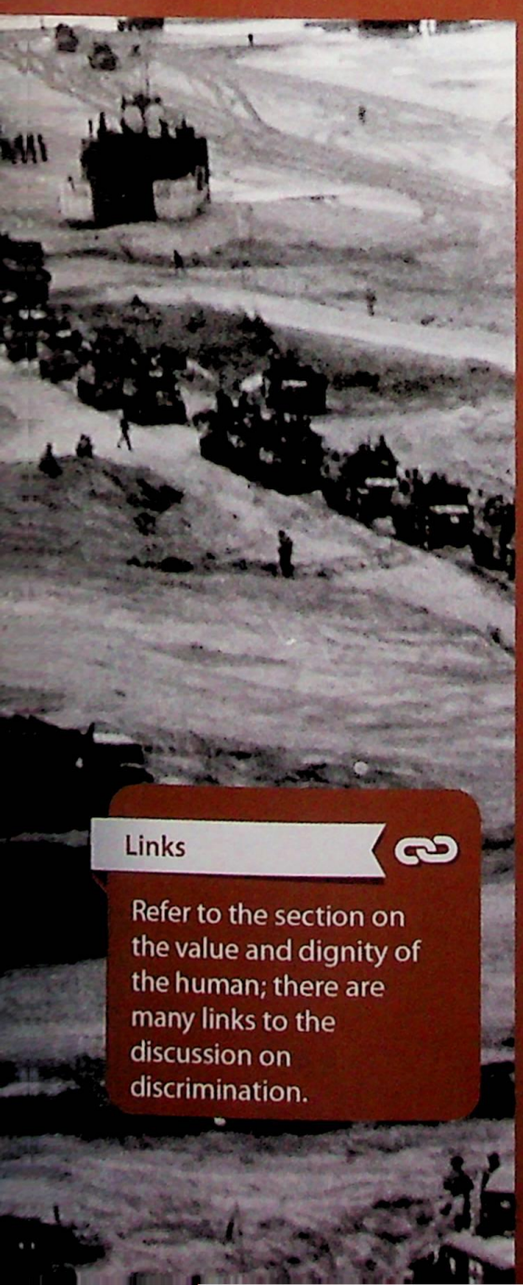
In reality, human society is like the human body, in which each of its parts plays a role in its survival and comfort. Each component must be given distinction and value based on its capabilities and honored by the other members, so that its rights will not be violated because the encroachment of the rights of one sector will be tantamount to the transgression of the rights of the entire society. Based on this same principle, Islam presents a just view for the management of different societies and nations. By recognizing the diversity that exists between all beings, it establishes that all creatures are to have their dignity protected, particularly human beings. Secondly, virtue is presented as the criterion for superiority and insists that rights and social advantages are dependent upon individual merit(s). The style of Islamic governance brought into fruition by the Holy Messenger (s) is the best example of how to establish justice and meritocracy. For example, Bilal Habashi, who was one of the faithful companions and helpers of the Prophet (s), was an Abyssinian (Black) slave, who had been bought and freed by Prophet Muhammad (s). Divergent ethnic groups, like Iranians who spoke Farsi, were very influential in the development and promotion of Islamic civilization and culture. One of the most outstanding figures was Salman al-Farsi, about whom the Prophet (s) said, "Salman is from our household," singling him out for having been one of the most exemplary companions of the Holy Prophet (s).

Types of Discrimination

In our everyday language, the term discrimination is used in different situations: discrimination of parents towards their children, discrimination of society against particular groups, racial and ethnic discrimination, etc. Our intention in most of these cases is when a society, or a part of a society which has more power, deprives a person or group from opportunity or privilege without any plausible explanation and gives special distinction to another person or group. When there is discrimination there is no equal opportunity for social mobility: people experience inequality in education and work. Here, we will discuss the most common types of discrimination:



Types of Discrimination #1



Links

Refer to the section on the value and dignity of the human; there are many links to the discussion on discrimination.

1) Racial Discrimination

Prophet Muhammad (s):
"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."

Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjād (as) in answer to a person who asked him about the meaning of racism, beautifully and elegantly explained the meaning of racism and the criterion for its existence as:

"If a person considers the evil of his own people and nation as better than the good of others, he is being prejudiced. Loving one's family and people is not being prejudiced; however if one helps them in committing unjust acts, he is being prejudiced."

One of the bitter and unpleasant realities of human life is racial discrimination. This occurs when members of a race consider their race to be superior to others and accordingly give themselves a special distinction.

With the advancement of civilization and the improvement of the social, political and cultural aspects of societies, it was expected that discrimination would disappear forever and justice and equality would rule.

Unfortunately, we have witnesses racial discrimination in contemporary societies. Essentially, one of the slogans of Islam is to fight against racism and it has defined the criterion of superiority among humans to be only piety and closeness to God. All traditions quoted from the Prophet (s) and Imams (as) condemn racism and racial pride; we will quote some of them here:

The Prophet (s): "Oh people, your God is one and your father is one; you are all from Adam and Adam is from dust. That person from among you who is more pious, will be more honourable before God. An Arab is not superior to a non-Arab except through piety."

The Prophet (s): "Behold that you are not superior to red and black-skinned people, except if you were to be more pious."

Imam Sādiq (as): narrated that the Messenger of God (s) stated: "Whoever holds a mustard seed sized amount of prejudice in his heart, on the Day of Resurrection, God will raise him up with the ignorant Arabs."

The Prophet of Islam (s) was himself one of the biggest defenders of human rights and combatants against racism and exerted many efforts in this field. In his time, the heads of the Quraish tribe did not accept the principle of equality which the Prophet had established. They said to the Prophet: "The reason we do not attend your meetings is that people such as the Bilāl al-Habashī, Salmān al-Fārsī, Suhayb al-Rūmī and slaves, are present. Send them away from you so that we sit

together with you." However, the Prophet did not accept their request. They proposed to the Prophet (s) another idea: "Allocate one day for them and one day for us." Afterwards, this verse was revealed: "Do not drive away those who supplicate their Lord morning and evening desiring His face. Neither are you accountable for them in any way, nor are they accountable for you in any way, so that you may drive them away and thus become one of the wrongdoers." (6:52) After the revelation of this verse the Prophet (s) also declined this request.

There are many examples of this in the behaviour of the Prophet of Islam, for example when the Prophet (s) commanded the Ethiopian Bilal to go on the roof of the Ka`ba and call out the adhan, `Attab bin Usayd said: I thank God that my father has passed away and did not see this day! Also, Hārith bin Hishām complained: "Could the Prophet (s) not find anyone other than this black crow?" (*Tafsīr Rūh al-Bayān*, vol. 9, p. 90) In answer to these people, this verse was revealed:

"O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you." (49: 13)

God clearly declares that race and gender differences are primarily for recognition of one another and not for nations and tribes to take pride in and boast about and as a means to claim superiority over one another.

These are only some examples of the centrality of rights and the combatting against oppression in the viewpoint of Islam. Certainly, history has recorded racism as a cause of much oppression.

Progress Tracking

Note that patriotism and liking one's nation is not condemned in Islam. However, nationalism sometimes has a strong tendency towards racism. Islam has two different approaches to the issue of patriotism and nationalism. Nationalism is something which is in vain, but patriotism prepares the ground for, and encourages, development. Therefore patriotism, something desirable, needs to be distinguished from nationalism, which has been denounced. It is nationalism when someone violates the right of another person, race, or nation in order to benefit his homeland and to prefer to take benefits that one is not entitled to rather than those who are entitled, to receive them. These are clear examples of oppression that, from the viewpoint of Islam, which is based on support for justice and fighting of oppression, are rejected and condemned. However in regard to patriotism and liking of one's nation and relatives, Islam holds a completely positive view, and in some cases, even places much emphasis and highly recommends it. Especially in relation to a person's family and neighbors, Islam gives many rights, which must be observed by the individual. In summary, according to the Islamic view, no person, ethnicity or nation should oppress another person, ethnicity or nation, and the criterion of superiority must be merit and no person is superior to any other.

Types of Discrimination 2#

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, what were the causes the led to the establishment of the feminist movement? Was this movement able to achieve its aims? Share your views with your classmates.

2) Gender Discrimination

The woman, throughout history and in most places of the world has possessed few, if any rights whether in civilized or uncivilized societies.

There are undeniable differences between men and women. Men and women are in many cases similar but in some cases they have differences.

In Islam, two different sets of rights have been determined for women and for men. One set is legal rights and the other is moral rights; each of the two enjoys much importance at the individual and social level, especially the issue of women and family. A noteworthy point is that from the viewpoint of Islam, the rights of women and men are equal, but different. The total value of the rights of women is equal to the total value of the rights of men, but the types and particularities of their rights, due to natural differences in their body and spirit, vary in some cases. It would be funny if we were to believe in the same rights for women and men, because women can become pregnant and after coping with the difficulties of pregnancy, bring a new human into the world, give it milk and shower it with motherly love; however, these things do not happen to men. Since rights and responsibilities are in proportion to one another, they must be defined in such a way that does not deprive a person of their rights and result in that individual being oppressed. For more familiarity with the rights of women in Islam, first the position and value of women from the viewpoint of the Qur'an and Islam, as well as their moral rights, should be examined:

MAN=WOMAN

Reference

Refer to the book "Women's Rights in Islam" by Ayatullah Mutahhari and give three examples of oppressive traditions towards women, practiced among the Arabs in the age of ignorance and which were fought against and eradicated by Islam. You can find this book in the library of the following website:
www.pureislam.org
It is recommended to read the entire book for those who would like to know more about the viewpoint of Islam towards the rights of women.

The Value of Women in Islam

In order to understand the status and value of women in Islam, first we must see, just as in some other schools of thought, whether the Quran regards the essence of women as different from that of men, or that they are the same; so the question is, are men and women of one essence or do they originate from two different essences? In answer to those people who regard women to have originated from a different essence than men and which is of lesser value, the Qur'an explicitly states that women have been created from an essence just like that of men; both are of the same kind. About the first human, God states: "...Your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it..." (4:1) From this verse it can be easily understood that men and women were created from the same essence and which is of one kind. Islam places a lot of emphasis on human dignity and since men and women originate from one essence, it equally emphasizes the protection of the dignity of both sexes. According to this Qur'anic principle, women, like men are endowed with rights which are in conformity with their creation, such as the right to life, ownership, association, freedom and choice. Of course, as we discussed previously, what is in Islamic law in regards to women's rights in some cases differs, due to consideration of natural physical and spiritual differences (and consequently there are different responsibilities assigned to women and men). For example, as was also discussed previously, in regards to freedom, all individual and social freedom can only be achieved in the shadow of spiritual freedom. And so, as an example, with the issue of hijab (modest covering) and safety for women, what God has commanded is the spiritual freedom of women and protection of society from corruption and promiscuity, and the preservation of the sanctity and dignity of women. On this basis, countries that have banned Islamic hijab are actually making one of the biggest mistakes within the field of human rights. Unfortunately, the arrival of modernity in some Western countries has meant the promotion of promiscuity and negation of spiritual freedom. Islam places much emphasis on the issues of hijab and restriction of the mixing of unrelated men and women, and regards these as the foundation of family and society. The duty of covering which Islam has decreed for women does not mean that they should only stay at home. Islam does not believe in the imprisonment and confinement of women; although this has occurred in some countries but does not exist within Islam. The covering of women in Islam means that in their interaction with men, women should cover their bodies and not display themselves. On the discussion of hijab, the apparent issue is whether a woman can be bare or should be covered and occasionally it is discussed with a compassionate tone, asking whether it is better for a woman to be free or imprisoned under hijab. However, the spirit and essence of the issue is something else and it is this: should men, except for fornication, have absolute freedom in the sexual exploitation of women? In this matter, the man is the beneficiary, not the woman, or at least, he has more benefit. In fact, the sexual drive is the strongest human instinct and sexual freedom ignites these passions. Man, by his nature, has been created in a way that his spirit seeks infinity. When man's spiritual desires are directed toward the material, they will not stop at any limit; when he reaches to a certain stage, he will seek to reach to the next stage. In order to guard the

honour of women and men, and to control the sexual drive while bringing forth calm, Islam has introduced two things as the solution:

1) The satisfaction of the instinct according to its natural need – this has been recommended and facilitated by the commands of Islam in relation to marriage;

2) Prevention of its excitement and stimulation – the Islamic command in relation to hijab, dressing modestly, is to enable this.

Progress Tracking

According to Islam, it is obligatory for a woman to cover her whole body except for around the face and the hands up to the wrists. There is no requirement to cover the face and hands up to the wrists on condition that they are free from any kind of make-up and other types of adornment that attract attention, otherwise that would also be obligatory. It should also be noted here that the obligation on the woman to cover around the face and the hands up to the wrists does not however permit a man to look licentiously at her.

The Moral Rights of Women

The Prophet (s) stated: "The best in faith are those who have the best manners and are kindest to their families (Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 71).

One of the salient features of the Islamic religion is its very large number of instructions, recommendations and guidelines in the area of ethics and moral rights of the individual and society. One of the main focuses for these instructions and recommendations is in relation to the mother, wife, daughter, and, in general, the issue of women. Each of the family members has their own rights and these rights reflect an individual's responsibilities, needs and desires. As an example, the Holy Quran, after the order to obey God, instructs people to be good to their parents: this conveys the importance of kindness to parents and respect for their position and indicates the many rights that they hold. It is interesting that, according to Islamic teachings, being good to mothers has precedence over being good to fathers and this is due to the mother having a great many rights over the child. One of the outstanding features of the religion of Islam is in its rights and code of ethics related to spouses, which strengthen bonds and add to the joy of living life together.

On family life, Islam emphasizes moral rights over legal rights; moral rights than legal rights: moral rights strengthen family life while making it more sustainable and enjoyable; however legal rights have typically been established for occasions where there are situations of differences and conflict. A family leading an Islamic way of life, by putting into practice Islamic moral teachings, can live the best and most gratifying kind of life and enhance provision for the spiritual and material needs of all members of the family. For example, for women who want to marry, Islam has given them the right to receive payment of a mahr; after the would-be husband has accepted the amount of this mahr and marries the woman, she has the legal right to request its payment at any time. This is one of the points in women's legal rights; however under moral rights, Islam encourages the woman to lower the value of her mahr, or, after marriage, to even forgive her mahr altogether: this is because the basis of a strong married life is love, not money and wealth. Therefore, what Islam gives most importance to, is the observance of moral rights within the family, which are built on a base of love and respect and whereby each of the parties (husband and wife) have to respect each other and endeavour to ensure that the other party's rights are not infringed. Moral rights are not limited to families and Islam has stipulated many ethical rights within society in which particular attention has been paid to women and their safety and modesty. Protecting women from desiring looks respects their position

and status. Certainly, with one glance, the negative outcomes from some non-Islamic cultures, where women are seen as commercial goods and a means to satisfy sexual needs, can be observed.

The Legal Rights of Women

As previously mentioned, from the Islamic perspective the rights of women and men, in terms of quantity and value, are equal, but since wisdom and justice require that God consider their physical and psychological differences, therefore in issues that relate back to their differences, their rights also differ; this is while in terms of value, the totality of the rights of women is equal to the totality of the rights of men. Some of the issues in which the rights of women differ from men are within the areas of the mahr payment, maintenance, compensatory payments and inheritance. The compensatory payment for the taking of a life of a man being twice that of a woman does not show his superiority to a woman, just as the equal amount of compensation payable for taking the life of an ignorant man and a learned man does not show their equality. If we compare the sum of the rights of women with those of men, we will see that they are balanced. The difference in retributive punishments and compensatory payments, as well as in mahr payment and provision of maintenance, between women and men must be seen in the light of the creational differences existing between them. A religion that places the responsibility for payment of mahr and maintenance of wife and family on the man, as well as gives him the duty to work and fight in war, also puts the compensatory payment for the taking of a life of a man at double that of a woman in order for justice to be achieved. Here it is worthy to note that when a man is killed, the compensatory payment is paid to the family he had headed in order for them to not suffer from material deprivation due to the loss of their provider. In fact, each of the Islamic laws takes into consideration the interests of the individual and society, which, if observed, ensure the individual and social well-being of humans. So, not only has Islam paid attention to the rights of women, it has defined them based on their physical and psychological needs and desires. Those people who accuse Islam of not respecting the rights of women are the real culprits in this case because they not only deny women and men the blessings of spiritual freedom, but they have also not defined their rights in accordance with their characteristics and needs and inevitably cause the trampling of many of their rights. Here, we will look at one of the discussions concerning the rights of women:

The Difference in **Inheritance** between **Men** and **Women** in **Islam**

Among the critics of Islam, the one issue which they select for denunciation is the inheritance of women. They say, "Why has Islam made the inheritance of women, who are weaker than men, half the men's share? Is this not an injustice against women?

Before the coming of the religion of Islam, the property and assets of anyone who died were seized by others. Among civilized and non-civilized nations of the world, this confiscation was by force; so that, whoever had more power, seized the property and assets of the deceased and those who were weaker, such as women and children. The situation of Arab women was more desperate than anywhere else. Among the Arabs, women were bought and sold as if they were merchandise and were deprived of all rights, individual and social, even the right to inheritance. The property and assets of the deceased went only to boys who had the ability to fight and defend the family; even boys who were young were denied the right to inherit. Not only did the pre-Islamic Arabs deprive women of the right to inheritance, at times they were considered to be among the assets of the deceased and formed part of the inheritance.

Reference

To find out more information on the women's share of inheritance in Islam, read chapter nine of the book *"A New Perspective: Women in Islam"* by Sayyid Moustafa al-Qazwini and Fatma Saleh. You can find the book at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

With the advent of Islam and its particular instructions, the position of women entered a new stage. It was in this age that women, based on the Islamic commandments, enjoyed full individual, social and human rights. Islam brought about a great revolution in the matter of women's inheritance rights. It gave women the right to inherit and also abrogated all the repressive pre-Islamic laws, which were based on the beliefs and customs of the tribes. Islam did not only decree the right of inheritance for women but also forbid the practice of inheriting women.

The reason for the difference in the shares of men's and women's inheritance is due to the fact that the duties and responsibilities of men and women in society are not the same. God has given more financial responsibilities to men and has made some tasks mandatory for them, which are not compulsory for women. In order for men to better perform these tasks, a larger share of inheritance has been provided to him. That Islam has allocated a lesser share for women does not mean that He has neglected them; rather it is solely based on social and economic reasons. The financial obligations of men are more than those of women and so they are in need of more resources. Some of the obligations that only men are required to fulfill are: provision of the livelihood and welfare of women and children, payment of dowry to the spouse, participation in jihad and the provision of living and travel expenses of the wife and children in that time, payment of compensation (al-dīyah) on behalf of relatives and payment of the living costs of impoverished close relatives (such as mother, father and sister).

As can be seen, all the variations in the rights that Islam has given to men and women are based on wisdom and individual cases.

Reference

For more information on the rights of women in Islam, you may refer to the book "*Islam and Women's Rights*" by Muhammad Jawad Bahonar. You can find the book at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Examiner's Tip

What was the situation of women's rights before the advent of Islam? Explain why in Islam the inheritance of women is less than men? In answering these questions, try to write your answer in a logical manner.

Reading Comprehension

1) Explain how the unity of the human personality and that always, and in every circumstance, he calls himself "I" and refers to himself, can prove the existence of the soul within ourselves.

2) How does Darwin's theory of evolution affirm the existence of God?

3) What is the difference between a theory and fact? Can Darwin's process of evolution through natural selection be considered a fact? Why or why not?

4) In relation to the discussion on divine destiny, explain how the knowledge of God is compatible with the free will of humans. Provide examples.

5) Name the most important factor(s) which distinguish humans from animals and why?

6) State two characteristics of human nature. Also, explain what the difference is between the tendencies of humans and animals. Support your answers with examples.

7) Explain what spiritual freedom means and why the acquisition of other freedoms depends on this type of freedom.

8) Describe two ways in which Islam eradicated slavery.

9) Explain the Quranic perspective on human dignity and how this dignity can increase or decrease.

10) Islam has stipulated two kinds of rights for human life; name those two and give a brief explanation of them. From the viewpoint of Islam, which one of these two has more importance and is more effective?

11) According to the Holy Qur'an have men and women been created from the same essence? Explain the differences between their rights.

12) In your opinion, should the rights of men be exactly the same as the rights of women? Should the total value of their respective rights be equal to each other? Explain why or why not?

Objectives

- To learn about the concept of perfection and General and Specific Guidance.
- To become acquainted with the Prophets of God and their
- To understand the realm of the intellect.
- To learn about miracles and revelation.

Towards Perfection

When we look at the world around us and within all creatures, we encounter extraordinary harmony and astounding equilibrium. The order and symmetry that the eye sees induces wonder in every intelligent being.

The Holy Qur'an refers to this matter, that God, the Wise did not create any phenomenon without purpose, as follows:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ

We did not create the sky and the earth and whatever is between them in vain. That is a conjecture of the faithless. So woe to the faithless for the Fire! (38:27)

Another point that should be paid attention to, is that the creatures of the world can be divided into two kinds: 1) creatures that do not enjoy the power of will such as inanimate objects and plants, and 2) creatures that have free will such as humans. These two groups have differences and similarities in the kind of perfection that has been determined for them and in the type of divine guidance required to achieve that perfection.

In this chapter, we seek to discuss the fact that this wise and knowledgeable God has brought all creatures into this world, whether they enjoy will power or not, in order for them to achieve their particular aim and realise their perfection and that He guides them in the way to obtain that perfection. Sometimes this guidance is general, expressed as 'natural law' and 'instincts' and sometimes it is specific, manifested through 'human innate nature', 'intellect' and 'revelation'.

Links

For a reminder about the discussion related to the infinite wisdom of God, refer to unit 2 pages 39 - 40.

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, define the perfection of man? What about plants or stones?

Think About

Reflect upon your childhood. Did you have the choice to become either a man or a woman or another creation, like a bird? Why not?
The answer lies in the capabilities you possessed. You developed according to your human capabilities whether you liked it or not.

The Elephant and the Ant

Have you ever seen or heard that on the path of an elephant's development it became an ant? Or that a baby ant grows up to become an elephant? Or, instead of a tree bringing fruit into the world, brings a baby tiger? Although, these questions appear to be silly, if we consider their answers with care, they can help further our study of perfection. The fact that no ant naturally turns into an elephant is because it does not have the capacity to do so. When a baby ant is born, it is replete with different talents and capabilities that will flourish in its lifetime and eventually it will turn into an adult ant. In actuality, all creatures are like the ant, meaning that with the fulfilling of capacities, they will achieve their realization and since every creature has specific competencies, its perfection will also be particular to it.

Activity

Before reading the next section (Simple Answer), write down your response to the Simple Question in at least three lines.

Simple Question

Everyone has seen the falling of fruit from trees at various times and have passed by with indifference. Because it was not considered to be anything special that had just occurred. Among all these people, only one person by the name of, Isaac Newton, asked the following simple question: 'Why has the fruit fallen to the ground?' This elementary question paved the way for the discovery of the Earth's gravity, which had a great effect on future scientific discoveries. The reason for Newton's success may be due to him being conscious of his immediate environment and curious to find the cause behind every occurrence. You may have witnessed the growth of various creatures but have you ever asked yourself, why each creature has its own specific perfection or, 'why does an ant not turn into an elephant?'

Simple Answer

By paying attention to the living things which are around you, you should have been able to give a simple answer to the above question with the phrase: 'the way they have been created'.

All beings that we see have been created in such a manner that each one possesses their own special capacities and all exert efforts towards the fulfillment of those abilities. Consider the eagle that expands its wings and flies in the sky. When this eagle was a baby it had wings, but its wings did not have the ability to lift it off the ground. It had the potential for flight but it needed to realize this potential. In order for this eagle to fly, it had to eat well so that its wings would become strong. Flight for this bird is considered as one aspect of its perfection and in order to reach this state, it must pursue its particular path. By studying this example and the previous ones, two points become clear to us:

- Every creature has been created in such a way that they have their own specific capacities.
- Every creature is inclined to reach its particular perfection and fulfill its potentialities.

Natural scientists have always tried to discover the ordinance that governs nature and creation. Laws such as the law of photosynthesis or the gravitational pull between planets etc. are termed as natural laws, and natural desires that different creatures have in order for them to arrive at perfection, such as the need to reproduce and desire for life etc. are termed as instincts. Now that it has become clear that the answer to the question is in the creation of these creatures, an important question arises: 'who is the creator of them?' Or, in other words, 'which person has created these capacities and desires within creatures?'

Discussion Activity

Try to find other examples for the natural laws and instincts and share them with your partners.

Progress Tracking

This kind of guidance is not restricted to a specific kind of existence but applies to everyone and everything in the world and that is why it is called General Guidance.

General Guidance

He who created these capacities and inclinations within creatures is none other than the Wise and Powerful God. God has created and manages the cosmos and for the individual components of this system, whether large or small, He has established specific perfections. He has subjected them to natural laws and instincts, only a small part of which are yet known to humans, in order to guide them towards their perfection and advance the world to its best imaginable state. The creation by God of the capacities present in creatures is known as general guidance.

The Holy Qur'an in pointing to this reality, just as it attributes the creation of all creatures to God, also accredits the nurturing and guidance of creatures towards perfection and their ultimate aim, to the wise Lord:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى

He said, 'Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it.' (20: 50)

And in another place it states:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى * وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى

Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion; Who hath ordained laws. And granted guidance (87: 2&3)

Specific Guidance

As its name suggests, specific guidance is reserved for specific types of creatures. In reality, this type of guidance is especially for humans, who have free will. Humans benefit from this guidance through three means: their innate nature, the intellect and revelation.

As has been stated, instruction that emanates from the Lord for creatures is of two types, the first of which relates to all creatures and was discussed above. In this section, we will discuss the specific type of guidance and its meanings, i.e. fitrah, intellect and revelation, which belong to creatures that possess free will.

Discussion Activity

Before reading the next section, try to think of some other differences between the first and second examples and discuss them with your partners.

Various Inclinations

When newborn turtles move towards the sea, when a human exerts effort to remain alive and eliminates hunger and thirst by eating and drinking, or when he reproduces, they are in reality, performing actions based upon their instincts. Now, the question arises: when humans by their free will are kind and helpful to each other, or when they have a love for knowledge and are constantly in pursuit of the truth, or when they love beauty and celebrate it, does this also come from instincts? Is there a contrast between these actions and instinctive actions? The first difference that comes to mind is that the second group of actions can only be performed by humans but the first group is common among humans and animals. That which guides humans towards the performance of these actions is their nature.

Think About

History shows that all people in the world have had an inclination towards beauty, have been in search of knowledge and have been seeking God, whether they were successful in finding them or not. In your opinion, what is/are the implications of these inclinations?

Fitrah

*Fitra*h (i.e. innate human nature) is a human that guides the human towards certain matters. All humans possess innate nature, meaning that like instincts, it is rooted within creation and therefore does not disappear. Instincts are related to animalistic and material inclinations, which are common between humans and animals. They are related to the body, such as the need for food and water and sexual desires, whereas fitrah is related to the spirit and is the human tendency to seek divine perfection, like the love of beauty, pursuit of knowledge and the recognition of God.

Religion or the desire for religion, is from the view of the Holy Qur'an, an innate condition that is common among all humans:

> So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind (30: 30)

Links

For a reminder of the discussions related to fitrah, refer to Unit 2, pages 18-23.

Therefore, the tendency towards perfection, moral virtues, worship of God etc. are matters that have been placed within the nature of humans by God in order to guide them towards their Creator. The innate human nature is like a mirror; only if it is clean does it have the ability to reflect truth and if this mirror becomes darkened due to compliance with worldly desires and the commitment of sin, it is no longer usable. In fact, one of the reasons for the missions of the prophets was to help humans polish this mirror, a matter that will be explained further in future lessons.

Reference

To know more about the status of reason and its different roles read the first and second chapter of, *Reason, Faith and Authority*, by Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali. The article is available at: www.pureislam.org

The Intellect

The second means for guidance that God has placed within the human is the intellect. In the religion of Islam, the intellect has been paid special attention to, being introduced as a source that recommends doing what is good. In opposition, individuals have worldly and temporal desires, that pull them towards evil, which are called the al-nafs al-ammārah. God has created the human free and able to judge between good and bad; he chooses which one he wants. In this judgement, the intellect helps the human to recognise right from wrong and to consequently follow the path to prosperity or adversity. The human can find perfection through the will, in material and spiritual dimensions but he can also, by employing his will in the wrong direction, bring upon himself adversity and destruction.

Several questions in this regard come to mind: 1) Does the intellect have the ability to make correct decisions in all cases? 2) Does the intellect have the ability to distinguish all things that are beneficial to the human? and 3) What is the realm of the intellect?

Discussion Activity

Mention at least three cases in which reason cannot be relied upon. Share them with your partners.

Progress Tracking

This chapter does not try to downgrade the value of reason but explains the scope of reason and its inability to judge upon immaterial aspects of life and the eternal perfection of man.

The Realm of the Intellect

By reflecting upon the nature of the intellect and observing the profound differences of opinion of past experiences, it is very clear that the intellect alone is incapable of identifying all that is good for the human and it cannot offer a program that will enable humankind to reach all their possible perfections.

Imagine a person whose liver does not work properly and for this reason, red spots have appeared on his hands. He consults a doctor who does not have sufficient information regarding the liver and its diseases. How probable is it that the doctor would give the correct diagnosis and write him a prescription that would improve his condition? How can the diagnosis and prescription be trusted? This situation reflects the position of the human intellect. Since the knowledge accessible to the intellect regarding the human spirit and its perfections is extremely limited and general, it can never provide a complete and reliable prescription for his prosperity and perfection.

Regardless of this fact, if we consider the multitude of views in regards to the definition of prosperity and human perfection that have been propounded, and consequently to the ways in reaching them, it is apparent that the intellect is not sufficient in providing them. Some consider the observance of moral dos and don'ts to be the guarantor of prosperity. Another group considers achieving the highest satisfaction from lusts and material pleasures to be prosperity, whilst others regard a successful society as one which provides the most benefit to the most people, and so forth. However, none of them can present a comprehensive and perfect plan for the human's individual and social perfection. There are always differences of opinion and each day we witness changes in approaches and laws.

Case Study

Although reason is recognized as an independent source of knowledge, it has its own limits. There are many things on which reason has no judgment and is silent, because they are beyond its scope. Therefore, there might be many things that we can comprehend by other ways, such as perception, intuition or revelation which do not fall in the scope of reason.

Rational arguments will not allow you to grasp how a rose smells or what a mother feels when her child is dead. In respect to religious issues, there are many facts that are not perceptible by reason, such as the details of the resurrection. What is important is that there is nothing in Islam that contradicts reason. One must therefore distinguish between what lies beyond one's actual capacity and what conflicts with rational standards.

Revelation (Al-Wahy)

It was determined that the intellect alone is not sufficient to guide human beings towards perfection. Consequently, the merciful God, who created man, knows all his material and spiritual qualities, and who created the world in order for him to reach prosperity and perfection, guides him in other ways besides his intellect and instincts.

God Speaks with Humans

In Arabic, the term 'al-wahy' literally means giving a message quickly and secretly, whether by gesture, in a written form, or by inspiration. There is also a technical sense in which the term 'al-wahy' is used to denote 'the communication of God to the Prophets'.

The occurrences of divine *al-wahy* mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are as follows:

• Natural Instinct: We always admire the wonderful achievements of small insects, such as the bees, the ants, the spiders and so forth. The same is true about the laws of nature, such as gravity, the movement of atoms, planets, etc. This is all due to a general guidance, provided by God.

• Inspiration: Sometimes God suggests certain ideas or courses of action to some people who are not prophets. For example, in order to protect Moses, God inspired his mother to put her baby in the river. This inspiration was not conveyed through an angel nor was the mother of Moses a prophet. There is also a general form of inspiration which is for all people. For example, the Qur'an tells us that God has inspired mankind with discernment between virtues and vices (91:8) but the technical meaning of the term 'al-wahy,' and which it is usually used for, is the communication of God to the Prophets.

• Prophetic revelation: This is exclusive to the Prophets and has been referred to in the Qur'an more than seventy times. This is the highest and the most sophisticated form of divine communication. Since the advent of Islam, the Qur'an introduced itself, and Muslims have considered the Qur'an, as an instance of this phenomenon. According to Islamic beliefs, it is not just the Qur'an but other Divine books such as the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalm of Prophet David are other examples of this connection between the Divinity and mankind.

Reference

What are the characteristics of prophetic revelation in Islamic thought? To find the answer, refer to the article 'Divine Revelation' from the book *Word of God*, p: 14-26 by Dr. Shomali. The article is available at: http://www.mashomali.com/revelation.pdf

Activity

Refer to the verse (42: 51) and list the three ways of Prophetic revelation.

Compatibility of reason

One of the questions that is frequently asked in relation to revelation is, are the teachings of revelation compatible with the intellect? This question was first raised in the Christian world because some of the discoveries that scientists were presenting to the world contradicted Christian doctrines, eventually this discussion spread to the other religions.

Islam's response to this question is very clear: reason and revelation are in complete agreement and any disagreements which appeared between reason and faith in Christianity and some other religions are typically rooted in misunderstandings, superficial awareness of the texts, incorrect attribution to religious texts and, in recent centuries, an atmosphere that has given too much value and credibility to empirical science. Of course, to some extent, differing versions of texts and some distortions have also contributed to the problem. However, this matter by no means proves or confirms the incompatibility of the Word of God with reason, because both have been created as a means to find truth; therefore the root of this primitive attack must be sought elsewhere.

According to Islam, the intellect is a divine blessing and at no time sees it as being in conflict with revelation, but rather it is the first source for understanding religion and religious instruction. The most fundamental and important teaching of the religion of Islam is the existence of God and monotheism, and it is the intellect before anything else, which substantiates the existence of God and His attributes. Reason also has a role in establishing many doctrinal teachings and even religious commandments. Therefore the intellect and the use of reason are given a high status in Islamic teachings. Āyatullah Mutahharī stated in regards to this:

'I see in Islamic texts a great support for reason and in no religion of the world has reason, i.e. authority of the intellect and the authenticity and validity of reason, been established such as it has in Islam.' (*The Collection of the Works of Āyatullah Mutahharī*, Vol 23)

Islam believes that religious teachings must not, and cannot, oppose intellectual proof. If a belief is attributed to religion that opposes conclusive intellectual proof, that belief is certainly not correct. However, an important point to note here is that some religious teachings are beyond the understanding of the intellect, which does not mean that the mind rejects them, rather they are outside of the domain of the intellect. Because revelation comes from the perfect and absolute Being, it is natural that the limited intellect of the human is not able to understand some realities, especially matters related to the spirit and spiritual life of man, and thus is unable to comment on these matters.

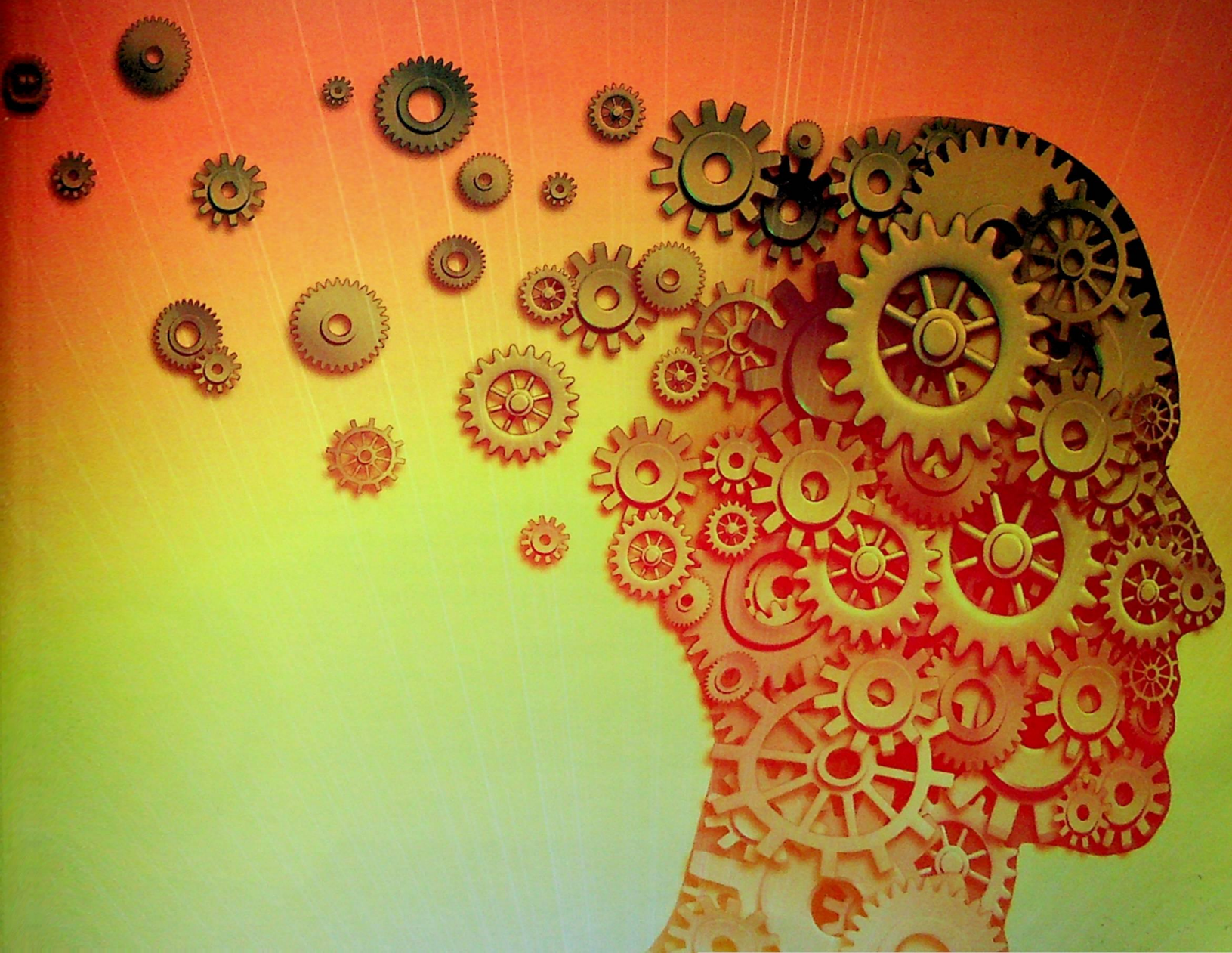
For a better understanding of the alignment of rational and revelatory proofs, three points are necessary to consider:

• Today, what many scientists refer to as rational poofs, are not strictly intellectual proofs, but the result of experimental observations and the output of thereof, which are performed in laboratories and workshops. What is certain is that scientists have acknowledged that there are deficiencies in these kinds of experiments due to the fact that the advancement of science often entails the annulment of previous theories and their replacement with new ones. While rational proofs have been one hundred percent correct, have never had any exceptions and do not change over the passage of time. For example, reason tells us that injustice is bad and this has always stayed true, it has never become obsolete or changed. Of course it is possible that man may make a mistake in his determination of what constitutes an injustice, but the principle of this judgment is general and constant.

• Due to its depth and breadth of meaning, revelation possesses its own richness and complexities; the scientific analysis and extraction of rulings from which requires a lot of research and precision. This is clear in regard to the Holy Quran, as it has been stated in traditions of the Prophet of Islam (s) and his Household (as) that the Quran contains different layers of meaning and that humans have been invited to contemplate its deep significance. As an example, the public perception at the time of the emergence of Islam (seventh century CE) was that the earth was flat and stationary and the sun revolved around the earth. The Holy Quran addressed this subject by subtly referring to the earth as spherical and having rotational and positional movements, so that it would not be subject to denial by the people. It has been mentioned several times in the Quran that the earth has multiple easts and wests; the existence of which can only be imagined if the earth is spherical in shape. Anywhere one stands on the earth's globe and faces towards north, east (meaning the place where the sun is commonly referred to rise from) will be on their right side. It is certain that only if the earth was a sphere could there be numerous easts. For example, if you compare two people living at opposite places on the planet, you will see that your two easts are completely different from one another, but if the planet was flat, there would only be one east. In the Quran, God has likened the earth to a tamed riding animal: "It is He who made the earth tractable for you; so walk on its flanks…" (67:15). It is clear that the characteristic of a riding animal is its mobility; in other verses such as "Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come heartily" (41:11), where the quality of the creation of the earth is explained, the constant movement of the planet is understood. This verse, which is among those verses that indicates the movement of the earth, uses the word "come" to signify in common terms the transitional movement of the earth. Because the people of that time did not accept that the earth could be in movement, they interpreted the outward explanation of the verse to something other than its true meaning. However we, who believe the earth to be in movement, have no need to interpret the verse as something other than its apparent meaning. These are very simple examples from the Quranic sciences that have been given and the Quran possesses many more profound layers of understanding, which have resulted in the writing of thousands of volumes about the wonders and teachings of the Quran, the mentioning of which is not possible here and to understand some of them would require years of study of the Quranic sciences.

.....and revelation

The summary of what we have said is firstly, some contradictions between revelation and reason are, in reality, not contradictions between revelation and reason; rather the real contradiction is between revelation and erroneous empirical sciences. Secondly, in many cases the lack of awareness and sufficient scientific extraction and understanding of religious texts have resulted in the illusion of conflict between revelation and reason. In fact, according to the Islamic view, conflict between revelation and reason, in principle and based on reason itself, is impossible. Revelatory speech and reason are the creations of one Creator and both reflect one reality: apparent conflicts between them are rooted in a false understanding of revelation or in the confusion of presumptive empirical proofs with definitive rational proofs.



Case Study

Stages of the Development of a Foetus

Several years ago, a group of Muslims derived information from the Quran in relation to embryology. Then all the compiled Quranic information was presented to Dr Keith Moore, a professor of embryology at the University of Toranto in Toranto, Canada. It was requested of him to give his opinion on the information related to embryology in the Quran. After carefully reviewing the translation of the Quranic verses, Dr. Moore said, "Most of the Quranic content on embryology is excellent, is in accordance with the latest findings of the science of embryology and in no way does it conflict with it." He added, "There are also some verses for which I do not have an exact scientific explanation and since the new writings and studies of embryology have also not referred to this content, I cannot give my view on its truth or falsity. As an example, the following verse can be cited: "Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging mass." The Arabic word for "clinging mass", *`alaq*, has three meanings:

1 –a leech
2 – a suspended object
3 – a clot of blood

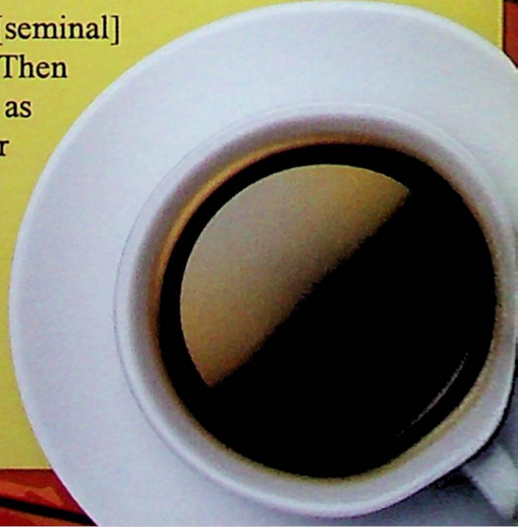
In this case, in which a foetus initially resembles a leech, Dr. Moore had no presumption. In the laboratory, at the initial, microscopic stage he compared the foetus to a diagram of a leech. He was amazed by the striking similarity of the two, because the foetus, in the beginning, which hangs on the wall of the uterus, has a shape similar to a leech and behaves like a leech, sucking blood and providing its own blood from the placenta of the mother. Also, he deduced from the Quran new information in embryology which until that time was unknown to him.

Dr. Moore answered about eighty questions dealing with embryological data mentioned in the Quran and hadith. Noting that the information contained in the Quran and hadith was in full agreement with the latest discoveries in the field of embryology, Dr. Moore said, "If I was asked these questions thirty years ago, I would not have been able to answer half of them for lack of scientific information."

Dr Moore had earlier authored the book, '*The Developing Human*'. After acquiring new knowledge from the Quran, he wrote, in 1982, the 3rd edition of the same book, 'The Developing Human'. The book was the recipient of an award for the best medical book written by a single author. This book has been translated into several major languages of the world and is used as a textbook of embryology in the first year of medical studies. In 1981, during the Seventh Medical Conference in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, Dr Moore said, "It has been a great pleasure for me to help clarify statements in the Quran about human development. It is clear to me that these statements must have come to Muhammad (s) from God or Allah, because almost all of this knowledge was not discovered until many centuries later. This proves to me that Muhammad (s) must have been a messenger of God or Allah.

Embryonic stages from the perspective of the Quran:

"Certainly We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him a drop of [seminal] fluid [lodged] in a secure abode. Then We created the drop of fluid as a clinging mass. Then We created the clinging mass as a fleshy tissue. Then We created the fleshy tissue as bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. Then We produced him as [yet] another creature. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators!" (23:12-14)



Pillars of Wisdom

The Holy Qur'an has regularly invited humans to think and reflect and regards lack of use of the intellect as one of the causes for the deviance of humans. For example:

And they will say, 'Had we listened or applied reason, we would not have been among inmates of the Blaze.' (67: 10)

Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and the dumb who do not apply reason. (8: 22)

Many Islamic traditions also lay emphasis upon the role of the intellect:

The Prophet (s) stated:

'Seek guidance from the intellect, which is a guide for you, and do not disobey its commandment so that you become regretful.' (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 1, p. 96; the content of this hadith has come in *Al-Jami` al-Kabir*, vol. 1, p. 3572,)

Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) stated:

'The intellect is the messenger of truth.' (*Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, p.15)

Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far al-Kādhim (as) stated:

'Allah has two arguments over mankind, an outer one and an inner one. The outer one is the Messengers, Prophets and Imams, and the inner one is the intellect.' (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 16)

Characteristics of the Prophets

Links

Intellect and innate nature were covered on pages 115-116. For more explanation on prosperity, see Unit 7.

Discussion Activity

Read verses (2:213) and (3:164) of the Holy Qur'an and discover the purpose of sending the Prophets. Explain to your partner the main goals of the Prophets.

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, what characteristics must a prophet of God possess to accomplish his divine mission?
Before reading "The Characteristics of the Prophets", try to guess some of them and share them and your reasons with your partner.

We have understood that God guides humans with general and specific guidance towards perfection and that the innate human nature and intellect are effective in the pursuit of perfection, but without the existence of revelation they cannot deliver the human to his complete state of perfection. Accordingly, God appointed for every nation a prophet, or prophets, who invited the people towards truth and monotheism. The Holy Quran also refers to this point in numerous verses, including the following:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ

"Certainly We raised an apostle in every nation [to preach:] 'Worship Allah, and keep away from the Rebels.' Then among them were some whom Allah guided, and among them were some who deserved to be in error. So travel over the land and then observe how was the fate of the deniers." (16:36)

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

"Indeed We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it." (35:24)

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

"The faithless say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' You are only a warner, and there is a guide for every people." (13:7)

This was in order that they deliver the divine message, which includes the program of how to live, reach perfection and secure prosperity for humanity, to different peoples in their different languages. All the divine prophets believed in the Unity of God and guided people towards monotheism. They were prominent among their people for acting based upon the commandments of God and their behaviour had provided the best role model for people. Among their primary responsibilities were the education and training of individuals and the freeing them from ignorance. The greatest aim of the divine messengers was to emphasize the importance of refinement, purification and training of the human being.

Our Fellow Humans

The primary characteristic of the Prophets was that they were human. They were not angels, jinn or other types of creature. Their attributes were human attributes; they ate food, wedded, lived among the people and were confronted with poverty and other social problems. The Qur'an mentions this point:

Say, 'I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God. So whoever expects to encounter his Lord —let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.' (18: 110)

This enabled them to have a good understanding of the conditions of the people to whom they had been sent. They were familiar with the people's difficulties and needs and thus took measured actions in performing their missions. On the other hand, the people did not perceive any distance between themselves and the Prophets and felt close to them. If prophets were chosen from among angels or jinn, it would not have had this result.

Biography

Abū Dharr al-Ghifari: He was the fifth person to embrace Islam. When he converted to Islam the Prophet Muhammad (s) gave him the title of honor, 'Abdullah' which means the servant of Allah. He was one of the most sincere and brave companions of the Holy Prophet (s).

Web Links

Find the life story of Abū Dharr at http://www.al-islam.org/Books/companion5/

The Number of Prophets

The Prophets came to deliver the message of divine love to people and save them from falling into the fatal abyss of ignorance and error. Hence, throughout history many prophets in various places in the world, and among various peoples, took up the responsibility for the guidance of man towards God. As to the number of prophets, it is known through traditions that many prophets were sent to the people and the Holy Qur'an affirms their multitude. The first of the Prophets was Adam (as) and the last was Muhammad (s). The Qur'an mentions twenty-seven of the Prophets by their names and states that they were many more (40:78).

It has not been possible to determine their number through definitive traditions; however, there is a well-known saying which Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī has narrated from the Holy Prophet (s), according to which, their number has been set at 124,000. Amongst those mentioned in the Qur'an are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Ezekiel, David, Solomon, Jonah, Zachariah, John the Baptist, Jesus and Muhammad. Among them, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are believed to be the greatest.

Activity

Refer to the following verses of the Holy Qur'an (at least four verses) and find out the names of the prophets mentioned. (33:40),(4:163),(2:136), (29:14), (4:157), (2:124), (11:81), (3:37), (37:123), (11:89), (21:85), (11:87).

Divine Law and Holy Books

The Holy Qur'an, speaks of itself and other revealed books: the Book of Abraham; the Psalms of David; the Torah of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus. A Muslim must believe in all the Holy Books and in all the Prophets. As we will see later, all the Prophets were necessarily infallible and sinless prior to and during their mission. From what can be deduced from the Holy Qur'an, it can be concluded that all the prophets of Allah did not bring divine law. Rather, five of them: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the Prophet Muhammad, are 'possessors of determination' (ulul-'azm) - those who have brought divine law. Other prophets followed the divine law brought by these prophets. There have been several reasons cited for the large number of prophets. The most important of which are given below:

- In ancient times, it was not possible to propagate the invitations of the prophets (as), and it would have been impossible for the entire world to be informed of their message.
- With the passing of time, and due to various factors, the instructions given by a prophet to the people of his era would face alterations and incorrect interpretations, so after some time the original religion changed into a deviated one.

Activity

Refer to the following verses of the Holy Qur'an (at least four verses) which provide corroboration for different Divine Books.
(87:19), (4:163), (17:55), (2:87), (3:3 & 4), (6:91 & 154), (2:4 & 285), (5:46), (4:152), (42:13).

Think About

Before reading the next section, think about this question:
Why was Prophet Muhammad (s) the last prophet and no new religion was sent by God Almighty?

Plurality of Religion

Why is there the plurality of prophets and certain differences in some devotional and social instructions of the divine religions?

The conditions of people's lives in different places and times are not the same; such differences can influence the quality as well as the quantity of social rules and regulations. It is therefore necessary in some cases for new regulations to be issued.

The Final Prophet

Although human intellect due to the aforementioned points realizes the rationale behind the plurality of the prophets and the differences between divine religions, it cannot discover the exact formula for the number of prophets and divine religions, and cannot decide when and where a new prophet would be appointed and a new religion introduced. It is, however, understood from the above points that while the conditions of man's life are such that a prophet's invitation can reach all the people of the world and his message can be protected and secured for future generations, and as long as the social regulations do not need any fundamental changes, no new prophet would be necessary.

It is for this reason that the Prophet of Islam had been the final divine prophet. The Holy Quran, which is Prophet Muhammad's (s) eternal miracle, explicitly mentions this point that Muhammad (s) is the final prophet and after him there will be no other prophet.

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

"Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah has knowledge of all things."(33:40)

Activity

Find out about some beliefs or laws from earlier revealed religions that are in common with those of Islam.

Abrogation of religions

After the advent of Islam, the previous religions were abrogated. Abrogation does not mean that all the teachings and injunctions of the earlier revealed religions are nullified rather it means that the duration of a certain religion, which was clear in God's knowledge from the beginning, has elapsed. However, a great deal of fundamental beliefs such as the unity of God, resurrection and the saviour as well as a huge number of injunctions (e.g. prayer, fasting, etc.) are to be kept in the subsequent religion.

Key Terms

Divinely inspired knowledge: is knowledge which a servant of God receives from Him, without ordinary means. As God bestows this knowledge directly, there is no process of teaching and learning. This type of knowledge was obtained by the Prophets and Imams.

Direct Students of God (Possessors of Direct Knowledge from God)

The responsibility for the guidance of human society was held by the Prophets of God. They had to possess knowledge which was useful for the guidance of humankind. It is apparent that the complexity of the human, the world, and the conditions under which he lives in it, requires a prophet to have vast knowledge; the acquisition of this knowledge by normal means is not possible. Therefore, God provided them with direct knowledge and appointed them to prophethood in order to guide humanity. Divinely inspired knowledge ('ilm al-ladunnī) is consciousness that God inspires directly into His servants. This knowledge is not acquired and obtaining it does not require an education nor study. This awareness is inspired in some of the faithful directly from the source of all knowledge, as has been mentioned in the Qur'an in relation to Khiḍr (as):

> [There] they found one of Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Ourselves, and taught him a knowledge from Our own. (18: 65)

Activity

Refer to the verses (72:26-27) and see who possesses this kind of knowledge.

Discussion Activity

The holy Prophets of God had access to Knowledge of the Unseen. In your idea, why did God give His messengers this knowledge? What are the criteria for giving this kind of knowledge to particular people in the world? Why are we not given such knowledge? Share your ideas with your partners.

Activity

Refer to the following verses and think about the way God Almighty speaks about the knowledge of unseen. Compare them with each other and write down each one under its appropriate category (i.e. the category mentioned in the text) (7:188), (10:20), (3:49), (3:179).

Examiner's Tip

You must be able to explain the two kinds of verses concerning the knowledge of the unseen and distinguish between God's knowledge and the unseen knowledge of the holy Prophets.

Can Other than God Possess Knowledge of the Unseen?

Divinely inspired knowledge from God is not obtainable by material means. Therefore, humans do not typically benefit from this knowledge. This kind of knowledge is called the knowledge of the unseen (‘ilm al-ghayb). This insight essentially belongs to God, Who has knowledge of everything: nothing is hidden from Him. He gives this knowledge to whoever He considers appropriate. He has given it to some humans, such as the Prophets, who, whenever they will and with the permission of God, can access this knowledge. Since God placed this comprehension at the service of the prophets, and they are infallible in receiving it and there is no contradiction between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the Prophets, which was made available to them with the permission of God. It is clear that the divine prophets are in need of God for their very existence, to be recipients of this divine knowledge and are completely dependent on Him.

Some have thought that this knowledge is reserved only for God, being inaccessible to others; however, the Holy Qur’an rejects their opinion. By studying carefully different verses of the Qur’an, it will become evident that there are two groups of verses dealing with the knowledge of the unseen:

First group: verses that identify the knowledge of the unseen as being particular to God and denying it for others. For example:

وَعِندَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لاَ يَعْلَمُهَا إِلاَّ هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِن وَرَقَةٍ إِلاَّ يَعْلَمُهَا وَلاَ حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الأَرْضِ وَلاَ رَطْبٍ وَلاَ يَابِسٍ إِلاَّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ

With Him are the treasures of the Unseen; no one knows them except Him. (6: 59)

This signifies that knowledge of the hidden realities is only for God.

Second group: verses that clearly state that divine saints (al-awlīyā’) have some knowledge of the unseen, such as:

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلاَ يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا * إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَى مِن رَّسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا

Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to an apostle He approves of. Then He dispatches a sentinel before and behind him... (72: 26-27)

This knowledge essentially belongs to God; however, He shares His knowledge with whomever He deems appropriate.

Case Study

A woman named Sarah, who was related to one of the tribes of Mecca, went to visit the Prophet (s) in Madina. The Prophet (s) asked her: Have you become Muslim and come here? She replied, no. The Prophet (s) then asked: Have you migrated here? She again replied, no. So then the Prophet (s) asked her: So, why have you come here? She said: You are of our clan and all of our guardians have gone. I have become very needy and I came to you so that you would give me something. The Prophet (s) ordered the children of Abdul Muttalib to give her clothes, a riding animal and travel expenses; this was while the Prophet (s) was preparing to conquer Mecca. At the same time, a person by the name of Hātib ibn Abī Balta`ah came to Sarah and gave a letter to her; he told her to give it to the people of Mecca and also gave her 10 dinars and a piece of cloth. In his letter were secrets and information related to the plan for the conquering of Mecca. Sarah took the letter and set out towards Mecca. The angel Gabriel informed the Prophet (s) of this incident. Consequently, the Prophet (s) commanded Ali (as), Ammār, Umar, Zubair, Talha, Miqdād and Abu Marthad to quickly take the letter from the woman. They set out to find her, and in the same location that the Prophet (s) said she was, they found Sarah. They requested the letter from Sarah but she swore she did not have a letter with her. They inspected the items she had with her but did not find anything. Therefore, they all made the decision to return back, except Ali (as), who opposed this decision, and said: The Prophet (s) did not lie to us and we are not lying. That moment he drew his sword and continued: Bring out the letter; if not I swear to God I will strike your neck. Sarah, when she realized the seriousness of the matter, she brought out the letter, which had been hidden in her hair. They took the letter and gave it to the Prophet (s). The Prophet (s) then asked for Hātib and requested an explanation from him. Hātib gave has reason for doing this action and the Prophet (s) then forgave him.

When the Quraysh lost hope in killing the Prophet(s), they decided to write a treaty between themselves, place it inside the Ka'ba and to put it into practice until their deaths. The treaty contained many provisions, including the halting of trade with the Muslims, the severing of marital and family relations with the Muslims and support for the opponents of Muhammad (s) in all fields. After the treaty was written out it was signed by the Quraysh. On the other hand, Abū Tālib requested his relatives to support the Prophet (s) in all areas and asked everyone to take refuge in a valley situated between the mountains of Mecca, known as She'b Abī Tālib. There, Abū Tālib placed observation posts in various parts in order to prevent sudden attacks by the Quraysh. The Muslims were placed under heavy pressure by the complete siege; however the crying of children, which, among other things, was due to their hunger, had no effect on the Quraysh. They lived on eating one date, or even half of one, each day and only in the holy months could the Muslims enter the city and transact trade. These conditions lasted for three years. In this time the Prophet (s) still continued to preach Islam. After three years had passed, God sent a message to the Prophet (s) through Gabriel that the whole of the treaty had been eaten by termites except for the name of God. Along with Abū Tālib, the Prophet (s) gave this news to the Quraysh and after they looked at the treaty, they discovered that what the Prophet (s) told them was true.

IRON WILL

Key Terms

Al-'azm (Determination): means that someone, after having certainty that an action is correct, performs that action in earnest and is patient when faced with any difficulties until that action is completed.

One of the distinguishing features of the Prophets was their iron will, patience and exemplary perseverance in the achievement of their divine goals. Among the Prophets, the five major prophets (ulul-'azm) hold a special position and therefore they have been called the 'possessors of determination'. Their will and persistence were such that the Holy Qur'an has introduced them as the best examples of will and determination:

> So be patient just as the resolute among the apostles were patient (46: 35)

All the great prophets faced bitter, ignorant and stubborn enemies, but they exhibited great perseverance in their missions. They coped with all the difficulties and battled with falsehood until the very end. We will mention some examples of the great efforts and patience of these prophets.

Prophet Noah (as) guided people towards God for 950 years and in this time only 80 people became believers. This means on average, one every 12 years. The verses of the Qur'an recall his persistence and hopefulness in guiding his people. Even though, people did not want to listen to his words and covered their ears with their hands, he did not cease his efforts in trying to save and guide his people.

Activity

Refer to the following verses and see how the Qur'an speaks about the prophet Abraham (as): (2:124), (3: 65), (9:70), (21: 68-69)

Prophet Abraham (as) was one of the prophets who invited people to the worship of God with much patience and soft language. When Prophet Abraham was about to be thrown into the fire, he became frightened and only sought help from God. After he was saved from this fate, he still did not give up on the guidance of his people.

Another divine test he faced was when he was ordered to leave his only beloved son, who God had miraculously given him at an old age, all alone with the child's mother in a hot barren desert. Years later, he yet again faced another divine challenge: he was ordered to sacrifice this same son, who was now a young adult and whom he loved very much.

Reference

Read section 12, Qārūn and Musa from the book *Anecdotes for Reflection: Part 1* to know more about the life of Prophet Moses (as).You can find the book at: www.pureislam.org

Prophet Moses (as) also experienced a life of struggle. He lived during the period of rule of dictatorship and repression of the Pharaoh, who regarded himself as a God. Prophet Moses (as) was appointed by God to fight against the polytheism and infidelity of the Pharaoh. He was never intimidated by Pharaoh's threats and called his companions to patience and promised them victory. In the way of God, he tolerated all their harassment and complaints.

Prophet Jesus (as)) stood against the deviations of his time and was subjected to a lot of persecution until they decided to crucify him; but in the end he was rescued by a divine miracle.

RON WILL

The Prophet of Islam (s) had a life of trials and tribulations to the extent that he himself said: "No prophet suffered as much as I have." (*kashf al-Ghumma* vol. 2, page 537 & *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr* Vol. 1) His father died before his birth and his mother and his grandfather, (who was his guardian), passed away before he was ten years old. After he was appointed a prophet, he constantly faced threats, harassment, unjust accusations and economic blockade, the losing of dear ones and children, the facing of enemies in imposed wars, the treason and conspiracy of hypocrites and many other incidents which, from the beginning until the end, he underwent tremendous hardship and difficulty. However, the Prophet (s) always responded to these difficulties with patience and tolerance.

Reference

To know more about the will power of the holy Prophet of Islam (s) read pages 73, 74 from the book, *The Life of Muhammad* by B.S. al-Qurashi. You can find the book at: www.pureislam.org

Links

To know more about the life of Prophet Muhammad (s) see pages 139-144 of this book.

Conclusion

The world has always been a place where veracity and fallacy, and the supporters of truth (the pre-eminent ones being the Divine Prophets) and falsehood have clashed. Difficulties can only be overcome with patience and endurance. A study of the lives of the Prophets shows that the greatest difficulty that these persons encountered was the ignorance of people. The eradication of ignorance and the development of knowledge were their main objectives and they went through hardship in achieving these goals. Accordingly, the majority of historians – religious and non-religious – have attributed knowledge, civilization, culture and advancement in human societies, to the campaigns of the Divine Prophets against ignorance and superstition.

Progress Tracking

Have you ever tried to ingest poison? The answer is very clear and the reason lies in your awareness of its danger and consequences. Also, the reason behind the infallibility of the prophets, that (committed a sin), was that they had a pure knowledge and in light of that knowledge they were completely aware of the miserable consequences of disobeying their Lord.

Infallibility

One of the most distinguishing features of the prophets is their infallibility. They were infallible throughout the entirety of their lives and immune from all types of major and minor sins (whether intentional or unintentional) and also from errors (like forgetfulness, inadvertence, etc.). They are also infallible in a threefold manner with regard to revelation:

- In receiving the revelation
- In preserving revelation
- In conveying the message to the people

The infallibility of the prophets does not merely equate to the absence of committing sins, because it is possible for an ordinary person not to commit sins, particularly if he/she has a short life. Rather, it means that the person should have an innate power, which protects him against committing sins even in the hardest situations. Such a power is the result of a perfect and permanent awareness of the disgracefulness of sin and having a strong will to control his/her own ego. Since such ability is only formed by God's help, its functioning is assigned to Him. However, it is not correct to think that God forcefully protects a person against committing sin and as a result deprives him/her of freedom. The infallibility of those who perform their heavenly responsibilities like the prophets (as), and Imams (as) is related to God in one more way, that is: God has guaranteed their immunity.

Progress Tracking

The educator's behaviour in teaching others is generally more important than his words; therefore, if a person has deficiencies in his behaviour, his words will not affect the people in a desirable way. Hence, God's objective for sending prophets as the educators of people will not be thoroughly fulfilled unless they are immune against any kind of deviations in their words and behaviour.

Intellectual Reasons for the Infallibility of Prophets (as)

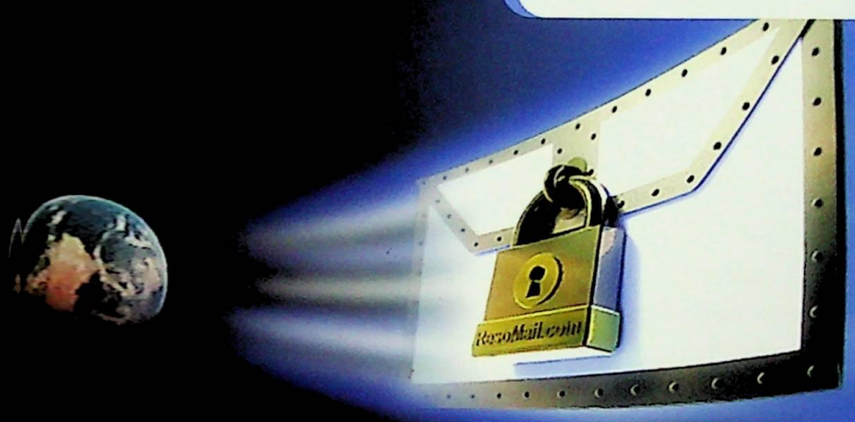
There are many arguments for the infallibility of the prophets. Among them two intellectual reasons are more popular.

The first intellectual reason is that the main objective for their mission is to guide man towards the truth and teach him how to perform the duties God has assigned to him. Moreover, the prophets are in fact the representatives of God among humankind and must guide them towards the right path. However, if such representatives and missionaries do not obey the divine instructions themselves and their behaviour contradicts their mission, people will find the contrast between their words and behaviour contradictory and, therefore, the objective of their mission will not be thoroughly fulfilled. Thus, God's wisdom and kindness necessitates that the prophets be pure and innocent, and for them to refrain from committing any undeserving action.

Activity

Refer to the verse (4:64) of the holy Qur'an and explain in at least three lines how the verse provides corroboration for the infallibility of the prophets.

The second intellectual reason for their infallibility is that in addition to relaying the revelation and guiding the people, they also are responsible for their purification and refinement; they are to provide the practical framework in elevatting humanity to the highest levels of perfection. In other words, in addition to educating and guiding them, they must train and assist them in traversing the path. This has to be done in an all-encompassing manner, so that even the most outstanding of individuals subject themselves to it. This responsibility can only be carried out by those who have achieved the most complete levels of human perfection, bearing the highest faculty of infallibility ('ismah).



Immunity of revelation

After recognizing that God's messages should reach people through one or more emissaries so the possibility of their voluntary perfection and God's objectives for man's creation become realized, it will on the basis of God's perfect qualities, be proved that such messages are in fact immune from intentional and unintentional alterations. Therefore, if He does not intend His message to be delivered to His servants in the most accurate form, it will be against His wisdom and will. It will also contradict His endless knowledge if God does not know how and through whom to send His message to His servants to keep it intact. Furthermore, it will be against His infinite power if He cannot choose the suitable representatives.

Therefore, since Almighty God is aware of everything, it is improbable to think that He has chosen an ambassador while He has not been aware of his wrong doings. Moreover, according to His endless power it is improbable to suppose that God has not been able to protect His revelation against Satan or any kind of unintentional alterations or forgetfulness. Similarly, with reference to His wisdom, it is unacceptable to suggest that He has not intended to immunize His message against falsification. Thus, it is the requisite for God's knowledge, power, and wisdom to deliver His message to His servants in the most accurate and perfect form.

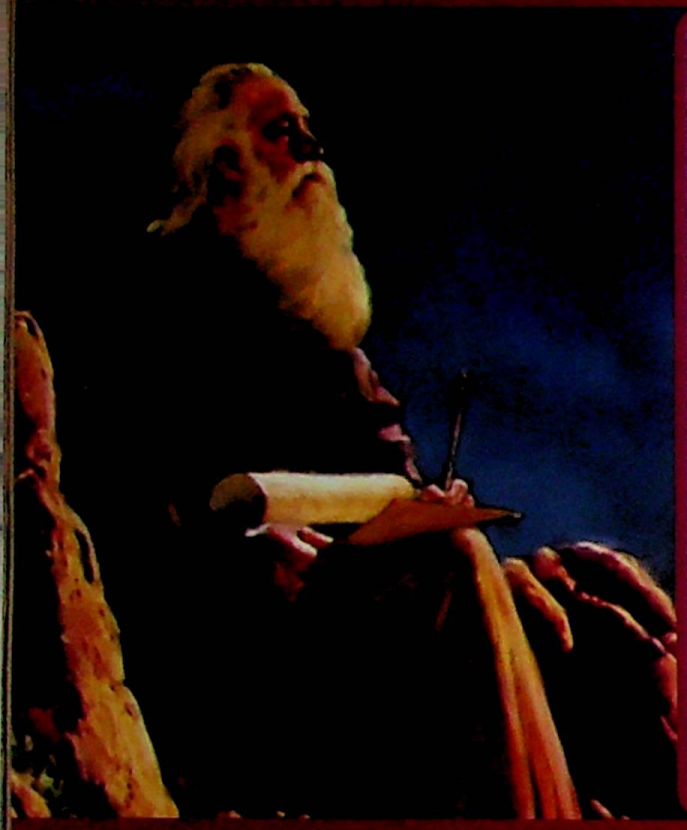
Through this discussion, the immunity of the angels in conveying revelation, of the prophets in receiving revelation and their infallibility against intentional or unintentional alteration and forgetfulness in delivering God's message are proven.

Think About

If revelation was not immune from errors and alteration and was open to doubt about the sender or mediators or the messengers, what would be its consequence.

Activity

Provide a brief explanation for the argument for the immunity of revelation.



How One's Prophethood Is Established

One of the important issues related to prophethood is how to establish the truthful claims of the authentic prophets and the false claimants to prophethood?

If a person is immoral and contaminated with sin, undoubtedly this person would be untrustworthy. Given the condition of infallibility of the Prophets, the falsity of their claim can be proven, especially if they encourage people to do an action which is opposed to a human's innate nature and intellect, or if there are contradictions in their speech.

On the other hand, it is possible for the character of a person to be so sound that an impartial person would believe in their honesty and sincerity and would readily accept their claims. It is also possible for a prophet's advent to have been foretold by another prophet, so that those in pursuit of the truth would have no doubt in their minds.

However, if a people did not have any reassuring signs nor any approval from another prophet, naturally there would have to be another way to prove his claim to messengership. God, the All-Wise, has provided them with miracles as a way to prove the truthfulness of prophethood.

Conclusion

The veracity of the claims of genuine prophets can be proven in three ways:

1 – From reassuring indications, such as the person's honesty, and consistency in pursuing truth and justice throughout their life. However, these traits are very difficult to verify.

2 – Introduction by a previous or contemporary prophet. This is limited, to those people who have known the previous prophet and have

Activity

Many people use the word "miracle" in their everyday vocabulary to denote a welcomed and somewhat surprising event. Islam has a special definition of miracle which differs from that of other religions. Before reading the text, write an explanation of your own understanding of the term "miracle".

The Definition of a Miracle

A miracle is defined as: an extraordinary phenomenon, which by the will of God, is presented by a claimant of prophethood and is a sign of the truthfulness of his claim.

This definition informs us of three matters:

1 - Extraordinary phenomena do not come into existence by ordinary means.

2 - Some of these extraordinary matters, by the will and special permission of God, emanate from prophets.

3 - These exceptional matters can be a sign of the truthfulness of a prophet, and in this case, they are termed miracles.

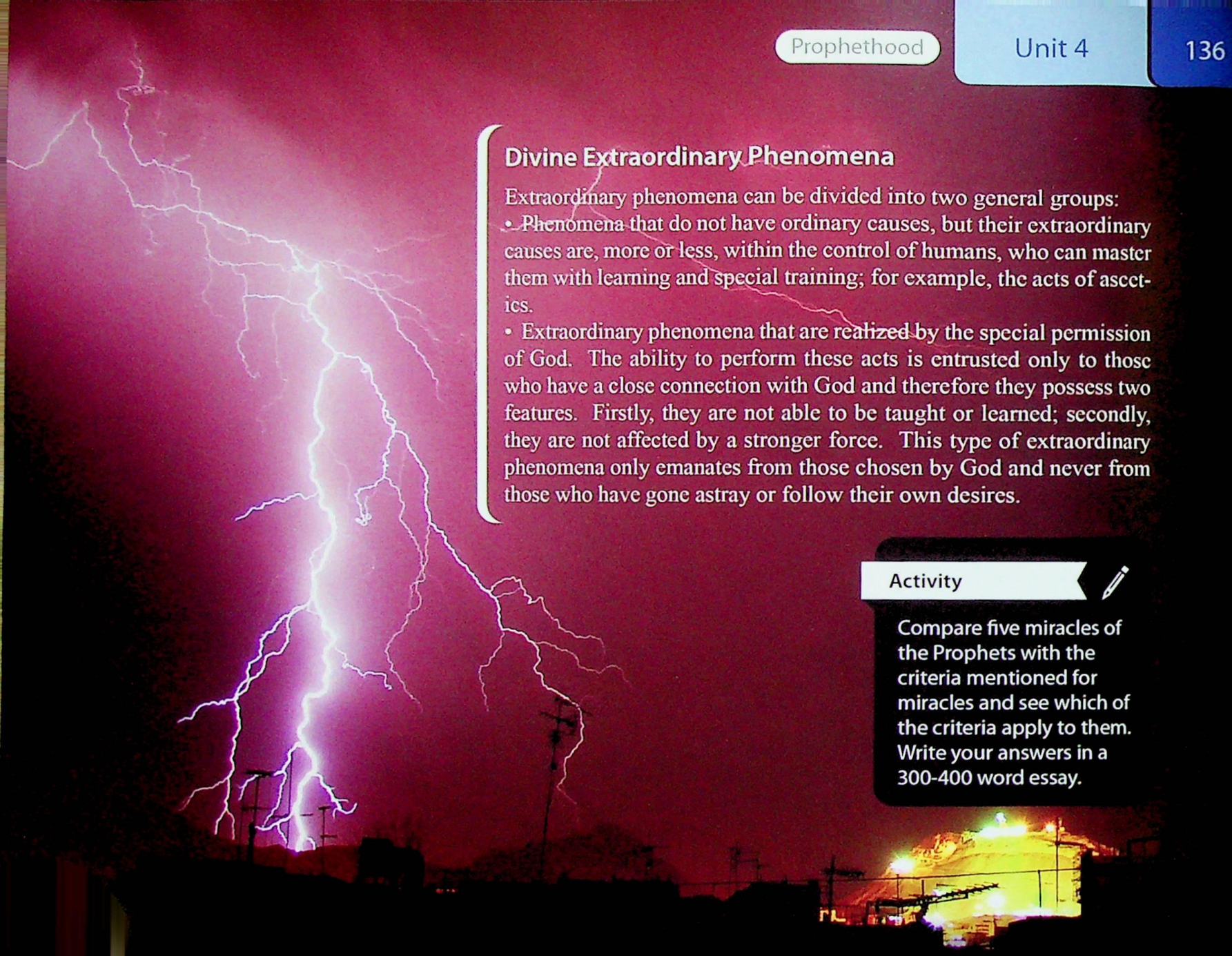
We will provide an explanation for each of the three points within the definition. They are as follows:

Progress Tracking

There are two types of causes in the world: material causes, some of which have become known through the advancement of science, and immaterial causes. Immaterial causes produce extraordinary phenomena, which observe the laws of nature, like material causes.

Extraordinary Phenomena

Phenomena which appear in this world usually occur by causes that can be recognized by experiment be it, physical, chemical, biological or psychological phenomena. However, in rare instances the causes of some phenomena cannot be known by sensory experiments and experts in different scientific fields have testified that these acts are not performed based on material and empirical scientific laws. There is another type of cause for these phenomena and they are known as being extraordinary.



Divine Extraordinary Phenomena

Extraordinary phenomena can be divided into two general groups:

- Phenomena that do not have ordinary causes, but their extraordinary causes are, more or less, within the control of humans, who can master them with learning and special training; for example, the acts of ascetics.
- Extraordinary phenomena that are realized by the special permission of God. The ability to perform these acts is entrusted only to those who have a close connection with God and therefore they possess two features. Firstly, they are not able to be taught or learned; secondly, they are not affected by a stronger force. This type of extraordinary phenomena only emanates from those chosen by God and never from those who have gone astray or follow their own desires.

Activity

Compare five miracles of the Prophets with the criteria mentioned for miracles and see which of the criteria apply to them. Write your answers in a 300-400 word essay.

Links

To learn more about the Holy Qur'an, read pages146-155 of Unit 5.

Reference

More information about miracles is provided by S.A. Rizvi in his book, *Prophethood*, in Chapter 4. The book is available at: www.pureislam.org

Characteristics of the Miracles of Prophets

If an extraordinary phenomenon, by the permission of God, is presented by a person who has a claim of prophethood, it is called a miracle and can be a proof for his prophethood.

These miracles are not against natural laws rather they follow the natural causes just like other phenomena yet their causes are hidden from human beings. For instance, the Prophet of Islam (s) has been narrated to have manifested a large number of miracles, which are mentioned in historical books; however the greatest and the permanent miracle of the Prophet is the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an challenges all who are familiar with Arabic to bring even one chapter like the chapters of the Qur'an; no one was able to, and no one will be able to, as the Qur'an itself promises.

It is noteworthy that these extraordinary phenomena are not only presented by prophets, but also, with the permission of God, by divine saints (al-awlīyā'). In the next section, the difference between the phenomena emanating from these two

Conclusion

Every miracle that occurs with the permission of God must possess all the conditions below in order for it to be regarded as a miracle and to confirm the truthfulness of a prophetic claim:

1 - It must be an extraordinary phenomena.
2 - It cannot be taught to anyone else.
3 – Nothing has the capability to oppose it.
4 – The person presenting the miracle should have the claim of prophethood
5 - The person presenting the miracle should be just, and not commit sins or be corrupt

Examiner's Tip

You need to be able to give a detailed explanation of the characteristics of a miracle and be able to differentiate between miracles and other kinds of extraordinary events.

Activity

Refer to verse (27:40) of the Holy Qur'an and find an example of al-karāmah.

Al-Karāmah

Extraordinary phenomena, in addition to prophets, can also emanate from some of God's saints (al-awliyā'). These saints do not have a claim to prophethood and therefore these unprecedented things presented by them are not called miracles; they are technically called 'al-karāmah'.
Therefore, the term 'al-karāmah' (munificence) refers to all of the divine extraordinary acts performed by non-prophets. Nevertheless, there are some unusual acts, which at times are rooted in human or satanic desires, such as magic, divination, etc. which should not be confused with miracles or al-karāmah because these acts do not enjoy the criteria of miracles or al-karāmah; these acts can be taught, learned or overcome by stronger powers. It is also possible to determine the unholy nature of such acts by referring to the corrupt beliefs or behaviour of those who perform such acts.

Reading Comprehension

1) According to the Holy Qur'an, all beings have been created with a purpose. What is this purpose which the Qur'an speaks about? Does the Qur'an's message concern only beings that possess will power, such as humans, or does it cover a broader spectrum of God's creation?

2) Is the desire for religion an innate desire of man? Bring Qur'anic proof to support your claim.

3) What is the intellect and what role does it play in the life of humans? Does the intellect possess the capacity of flawless reasoning? If so, explain how. If not, explain the intellect's capacity in reasoning.

4) Briefly explain general and specific guidance and state what benefit(s) each one brings for creatures

5) Considering what has been taught in this lesson, state whether the intellect alone can develop humans for a comprehensive way of living. Why? Also, explain why there is no conflict between reason and revelation.

6) Explain why prophets, for the guidance of people, must possess divinely inspired knowledge.

7) Why is there a plurality of prophets and differences in some devotional and social instructions of the divine religions?

8) Based on reason, explain why divine prophets must be infallible.

9) Considering the three criteria and definition for a supernatural occurrence, state the characteristics a miracle must possess.

Objectives

- To study the characteristics of the holy Prophet (s) of Islam
- To become familiar with his way of life
- To learn about the successes of his mission
- To understand why Muslims consider him as the paragon of virtue

Key Terms

Iwān Kisrā: is a Persian monument from the Sassanid era in Al-Mada'in, which is the only visible remaining structure of the ancient city of Ctesiphon. It is near the modern town of Salman Pak, Iraq.

Azargoshasb fire temple: existed in ancient Iran and was the place of adoration for fire-worshippers for approximately a thousand years.

The Bright Night

It was a strange night, when the Iwan Kisra cracked and the fire in the Azargoshasb temple, which had been burning for a thousand years, suddenly extinguished. All the idols of the Ka'ba collapsed and a great flash of light went up to the sky. The Prophet (s) of kindness was born to quench, the world's thirst for knowledge and love with his perfect conduct. The holy Prophet (s) personality captivated many hearts and his sublime character attracted the masses like a magnet. Many books have been written about his manners and lifestyle and numerous historians and orientalists believe that the biggest factor for his success and popularity was his impeccable behavior. In several ayats in the glorious Qur'an, Allah (swt) talks about the Prophet's (s) unique qualities and states that the cause for his popularity was his good manners and kindness. In this chapter, we will study the factors for his success, i.e. the character and demeanor of the holy Prophet (s).

Reference

What are the reasons for the events which occurred during the birth of the holy Prophet (s)? Find the answers on page 119, in the book, *The Message*, by Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani. The book is available at this website: www.pureislam.org

Think About

Usually when we hear about a successful leader, his intelligence and great management skills are listed among the secrets of his success. In your opinion, why have orientalists and historians considered his manners as the secret for his achievements amongst all the activities and responsibilities of the Holy Prophet (s)? Based on your understanding, what role does conduct play in a leader's prosperity?

Allah (swt) describes His Prophet (s)

In the surah of Repentance (Tawbah), Allah (swt) introduces His Prophet (s) to humanity with by important attributes:

"لقدجائكم رَسولٌ مِن انفسِكم عَزيزٌ عَليهِ ما عَنِتمْ حَريصٌ عَليكم بالمُؤمِنين رَؤُفٌ رَحيم"

"There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he has deep concern for you, and is most kind and merciful to the faithful." (9:128)

In the surah of The Pen (Al- Qalam) in the glorious Qur'an, Allah (swt) describes His Prophet (s) in the fourth ayah as:

"وانک لعلی خلق عظیم"

"and indeed you possess a great character." (68:4)

The glorious Qur'an regards the holy Prophet's (s) soft-nature and kindness as the secret of his popularity and in surah Ale Imran it states:

"فبِما رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لانفَضُّواْ مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنهمْ وَ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَ شَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يحُبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِين"

"It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him." (3:159)

Case Study

Sir William Muir, who was a well-known Orientalist describes the holy Prophet(s) in this manner:

A remarkable feature was the urbanity and consideration with which Muhammad treated even the most insignificant of his followers. Modesty and kindliness, patience, self-denial, and generosity, pervaded his conduct, and riveted the affections of all around him. He disliked to say, No. If unable to answer a petitioner in the affirmative, he preferred silence. He was not known ever to refuse an invitation to the house even of the meanest, nor to decline a proffered present however small. He possessed the rare faculty of making each individual in a company think that he was the favoured guest. If he met anyone rejoicing at success he would seize him eagerly and cordially by the hand. With the bereaved and afflicted he sympathised tenderly. Gentle and unbending towards little children, he would not disdain to accost a group of them at play with the salutation of peace. He shared his food, even in times of scarcity, with others, and was sedulously solicitous for the personal comfort of everyone about him. A kindly and benevolent disposition pervaded all those illustrations of his character.

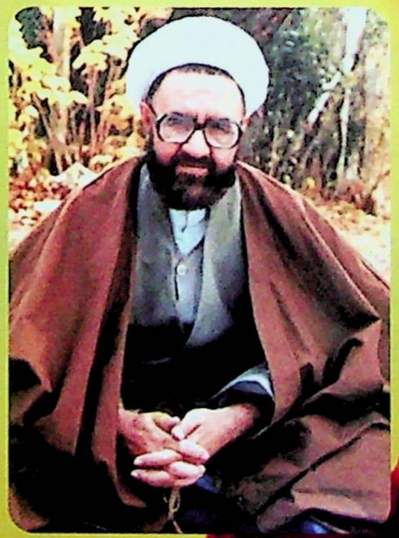
Sir William Muir (*Life of Muhammad*, pp. 510-13).

Discussion Activity

Before reading the next section, review the attributes of the holy Prophet (s) again. Discuss your understanding about these attributes with your friends. In your opinion, which one is the most useful for leading a society?

The Miracle of Morality

The holy Prophet (s) withstood all the spiritual and material pressures exerted by the disbelievers and did not give up his mission. After migrating to Medina, he established an Islamic government and gradually introduced divine laws and Islamic culture to Muslims. Āyatullah Mutahharī said: "What gave spirit, freshness and unity to this newly-founded society were two things: [one was] the glorious Qur'an which was read constantly and inspired people, and the other was the great character of the holy Prophet (s) which captured hearts." By studying the Holy Prophet (s) during the Age of Ignorance and how he was able to transform the society and form a new era in the heart of history, we'll have a better understanding about the greatness of his personality and various aspects of his godly life. Some key attributes of his excellent character include: trustworthiness, kindness, softness along with firmness, geniality in the family, benignity, self-discipline and simplicity, altruism, bravery and courage, resolution and resistance, leadership and management, being supportive of knowledge, devotion, hygiene and cleanliness, order and discipline are among the Prophet's (s) noteworthy features from his individual and social life, some of which will be explained in brief from Āyatullah Mutahharī's perspective.



Biography

Āyatullah Murtaḍā Mutahharī (1920 –1979) was an Iranian Muslim scholar, theorist, philosopher, and lecturer. He was an eminent and well- known theologian who dedicated his life to defend religion in the light of reason and intellect. He wrote more than 50 books and some of his major works include: *Tawhid* (Monotheism), *Divine Justice* and *Prophethood*.

His method of comparative discussion was one of his distinguishing features in his academic personality. His manner of examining intellectual matters was that, after clarifying the subject and examining it from the perspective of Islamic philosophy and teachings, he would review and criticize the perspective of other schools of thought, religions, and philosophies, expressing their strong and weak points, and then finally, he would prove the superiority of Islamic philosophy and teachings. This method was particularly outstanding in his philosophical and theological discussions. The second feature of his works was his historical studies in various academic fields. Familiarity with history and the root causes of an issue, and the evolutionary developments it has passed through, has an important contribution to the correct understanding of scholarly discussions. This method, especially in his philosophical discourses, has been adopted by others. The third feature is the exceptional comprehensiveness within his works. Many of the important and core topics of Islam and Muslims have been explained and interpreted within them, resulting in him being given the titles "Islamic scholar" and "martyr teacher" since he had expertise in most Islamic topics and passed on his wide-ranging scholarly findings to others. Another quality present within his works is simplicity and eloquence in writing and speech such that many people have been attracted to read his books.

Ayatullah Mutahhari had been a student of the outstanding mystic, philosopher and exegetist of the Islamic world Allamah Tabatabai and, in the realm of mysticism, had been one of the special students of that great personality.

He was assassinated in 1979.

Perseverance and Resilience

Two of the most distinguishing characteristics required to do missionary work is patience and perseverance. In this regard, God says to the Prophet (s) in the Holy Quran, "So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded..." (11:112). We have a tendency to look past the bright spot in the history of Islam and towards the dark days and this view, which is from "the future towards the past" portrays the reality in a different way. We need to imagine ourselves in the time that the Prophet (s) was alone; there was no sign of victory ahead of him. Obstinate enemies were out to eliminate him and some of his relatives were in the front line of this battle! He continuously went among the Arab tribes and invited them to Islam, but no one responded to his invitation. Stones were thrown at him and blood came from his blessed body, but he did not waver in his mission. He and his handful of followers were always blocked within their social, economic and political surroundings, to the extent that some died of starvation, illness and tortures that affected his heart and soul.

The way in which the days passed for the Prophet (s) are difficult to be described in speech and writing. For example, when he went to Taif with the intention of inviting the people to Islam, not only did the people reject his invitation but they threw so many stones at him that blood flowed from his feet. They got ignorant people to shout at him and curse him. He was forced to take refuge in a garden and sat under the shade of a tree and spoke to God: "O Allah, to You alone do I complain of the debilitation of my strength, the deficiency of my means, and the contempt with which people treat me. O Allah, the Most Merciful of those who have mercy, You are the Lord of those who are oppressed, helpless and weak and You are my Lord. To whom would You render me? To someone far-off who would sullenly frown at me? Or to an enemy whom You have given control over my affairs? If You are not angry with me, then I should not worry." Sometimes they called him a sorcerer, other times they called him crazy and at times they poured ashes on his head. They even plotted to kill him and encircled his house with swords. The trials that the Prophet (s) was subjected to were so difficult that he stated: "No prophet was made to suffer torment as I did." In the Battle of Uhud, they broke his teeth and struck his forehead with stones. However, he supplicated to God: "Oh God, guide my people for they are ignorant." Amidst these conditions, he continued with patience and perseverance. Finally, the sweet fruit of this tree was tasted and Islam not only fills the Arabian Peninsula, but exists throughout the entire world. Today, the call to prayer, which is his victory cry, is heard in the four corners of the globe and on every continent in the world.

Trustworthiness

Before announcing his prophethood, Muhammad (s) went on a business trip to Shām (Greater Syria) for Khadījah, whom he later married. During that trip, his ability, trustworthiness, reliability and uprightness became manifest more than before. He was so well-known as being upright that people called him "Muhammad al-Amīn" [meaning "the trustworthy Muhammad"], and used to entrust him with their property. After being chosen as the Prophet, although the tribe of Quraysh had become his enemies, still [illegible]

Worship

The Prophet (s) stated that: "The best of people are those who love to perform worship and prayer."
Spirituality and worship are among the most important points of discussion in regards to the behaviour of the Prophet (s). There are various manifestations of worship of the Prophet (s), such as prayer, remembrance, nightly devotions, supererogatory prayers, fasting and hajj. His prayer, which he called the light of his eyes, was accompanied with the utmost attention and presence of the heart. The Messenger of Islam (s) also placed special emphasis on supererogatory prayers. In addition, intense and prolonged worship along with their preparations and introductions, dividing prayers according to the hours of the night and remaining awake therein, recitation of the Holy Quran and conversing with his lord were among the devotional activities reported from the Prophet's (s) life. During the night, the Messenger of God (s) arose from his bed, make ablution, brush his teeth, recite some verses of the Holy Quran and then retreat into a corner and engage in worship and crying. Some, who saw him in this condition, asked the Prophet (s): "You, who does not have any sins, why do you cry so much?" He answered: "Should I not be thankful to God?"
Umm Salamah reported, "One night the Prophet (s) was in my home. I saw him standing in the darkness, his hands were raised up and he was shedding tears and was saying: 'Oh God! Do not take from me whatever blessing You have given to me, do not please my enemy, do not entrap me in adversities which you have saved me from, do not leave me on my own - even for the twinkling of an eye.'" I said to him, "You have been exempted!" He replied, "No person is without need of God. Prophet Jonah (as), the moment he was left to himself, he became imprisoned in the belly of a fish."
When the month of Ramadan arrived, the Prophet (s) freed all of his slaves. At the time of prayer he would tremble and whenever he worshipped by himself, he would prolong his prostrations. However, whenever he led the congregational prayers, he would recite them in a very normal and simple way. The Prophet (s) recommended one of his companions, who became a leader of prayers for other Muslims: "Whenever you are standing with others in prayer, after reciting the chapter al-Hamd, try to choose a short chapter to recite and do not prolong the prayer."
Imam Ali (as) in regard to the worship of the Prophet of Islam (s) said: "When he stood in prayer, due to the intensity of fear and grief and much crying, a sound came from inside him that sounded like the boiling of a pot set on fire; and this was while he was safe from the punishment of God. By these acts he wanted to increase his reverence for, and humility before God and to be a leader and guide for others."

Progress Tracking

In Surah Muzzammil, verse 20, the Prophet (s) and his Household (a.s.) have been commanded to spend half or a major part of the night in worship. This address is specifically directed towards the Prophet (s) and his household, as opposed to the other commandments, which are aimed at the Muslim ummah in general.
What is asked of us it that, we act upon that which Islam has made obligatory on us, such as the daily prayers, the fast of the holy month of Ramadan, to work and acquire knowledge, to the greatest extent possible to spend our time in worshipping our Lord and in His remembrance. In fact, in studying the characters of the Prophet (s) and his household (a.s), we should look at all dimensions of their lives so that we do not stray from the path of moderation. For example, our Holy Prophet (s) spent his nights in worship and his days were spent working, doing activities. He regarded work and effort as the means to provide for the needs of the family as a form of worshipping God and encouraged

Simplistic Lifestyle

Despite his high position and status, the Prophet (s) did not lead a life like that of rulers; he lived a very simplistic life. Once, a person came to see the Prophet (s) while he was sitting in a circle of his companions. He looked at those present and could not identify the Prophet(s) from among them, thus he asked, "Which of you is the messenger of God?" The Prophet(s) replied, "I am." This person describes the Prophet (s) like so: "I saw him wearing simple clothing like the rest." (*Kanz al-Fawā'id*, vol. 1, p. 212)

Cleanliness and Tidiness

The Prophet of Islam (s) not only gave importance to the cleanliness of his soul, but also gave a great deal of attention to the purity and tidiness of his appearance. By his unique behaviour and speech, he commended cleanliness and hygiene to others, not only for one's body but clothes as well.

In addition to the regular ablutions, he washed himself most days and considered both to be acts of worship. He washed his hair with cedar leaf and combed it, and scented himself with musk and amber. He would brush his teeth with care several times a day, especially before sleeping and upon awakening. He told his companions: "Never sit with yellow and unclean teeth in a gathering. Do not neglect brushing your teeth and keeping them clean." Before and after eating, he would wash his hands and mouth and he would abstain from eating bad-smelling herbs. A comb, scissors, mirror and toothbrush were items he would take on journeys with him.

The Prophet's (s) clothes were always clean as well as his home. He emphasised that rubbish should be taken out in the daytime and not remain in its place until night. He did not like unwashed dishes to be left and said, "Before sleeping at night, wash the dishes."

Cleanliness of his body and limbs was in harmony with cleanliness of his soul. He emphasised to his companions and followers that they keep their head, face, clothes and home clean and requested that they wash themselves, especially on Fridays, and that they use fragrance in order that they would not give off a bad odour while attending the Friday prayers.

These points are only a small reflection of the importance this great personality gave to the issue of cleanliness and hygiene.

Prophet Muhammad (s) lived a very simple life but he cared deeply about cleanliness and tidiness and recommended to others that they be clean and tidy.

Soft, Yet Firm

The personalities of God's chosen messengers possess opposite characteristics which are complimentary in nature. In other words, when God's satisfaction lies in mercy, their encounter with people will be full of mercy and kindness, and when it lies in seriousness and firmness, they deal with resolve and boldness.

The holy Prophet (s) was soft, moderate and forgiving in issues related to himself, were the keys to his historical achievements and success, but in fundamental and general issues where it was in the realm of law, he would show resolution and firmness and not overlook the situation. After conquering Mecca, he forgave all the harms that the Quraysh had inflicted on him during the past twenty years. He also accepted the repentance of his uncle Hamzah's assassin.

Yet, during that same conquest of Mecca, when one of the noble women had committed usurpation and such was established, he carried out the law regarding her.

His conduct towards his family

He was very cordial in his family and would not treat them harshly, which was in contrary to the social norm of his time. He strongly advised men to treat their wives kindly and stated: "All people have positive and negative qualities. Men should not consider only negative qualities of their wives and leave them; because whenever a negative quality of hers bothers him another quality of hers would please him. He was extremely kind to his children and grandchildren. He used to sit them on his lap or his shoulders and kiss them. One day, he kissed one of his grandchildren (Imam Hasan ibn Ali al-Mujtabā (a)) in the presence of a nobleman. That man said: "I have two sons and I have never kissed them." The holy Prophet (s) stated: "Whoever does not show mercy [on others] would not deserve [Allah's] mercy."

Pillars of Wisdom

The Prophet (s) stated:

'The most faithful people are those who have better manners within their families and express more love to them; and I express love to my family more than you do!'

'Respect your children and treat and interact with them in a good manner.'

With Slaves

During the Age of Ignorance, slavery was very common and slaves did not have any individual or social rights. The religion of Islam established numerous laws in an effort to revive the rights of slaves, doing everything possible to set the stage for their ultimate freedom. The Prophet (s) was extremely kind to slaves and during his lifetime, he would buy slaves and set them free in the way of Allah under various pretexts and would encourage others to follow his example. He would tell the people, "These are your brothers, feed them the same food you yourselves consume, and cover them with the same clothing you use to cover yourselves." He considered the slave trade as the worst occupation and would say, "The worst of people in Allah's eyes are those who sell people."

Reference

To know more about the League of the Virtuous (Hilf al-Fuḍūl) see the book, The Life of Muhammad - the Prophet(s)/ Chapter 4 by Akhtar Rizvi. You can find the book at: www.pureislam.org

Fighting against oppression

He always supported the oppressed and struggled against despots and there are many efforts to administer justice. In the [pre-Islamic] Age of Ignorance, he made a covenant with a subjugated group of people, for them to protect the downtrodden and fight against oppressors, this covenant was called "Hilf al-Fuḍūl." At times, he would remember the covenant and say: "I would not agree for that covenant to be broken and even now I am ready to participate in such a covenant again."

His Hate for Idleness and Wasting Time

He would say:

He (s) would say:

"O Allah! I seek refuge with You from indisposition, not being lively, feebleness and laziness, and disability and abjection." (*Al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr*, Vol. 1, p. 58)

He would encourage the Muslims to work and would say:

"Worship is seventy parts and the best of those is earning a halal living." *(al-Kāfī*, Vol. 5, p. 78)

Organization and Doing Things in a Proper Manner

When he did something, he liked to do it impeccably and appropriately, to the extent that when his loyal companion, Sa'd ibn Ma'ādh, passed away and was placed in the grave, and he saw that they had not constructed it properly, he personally moved its stones and bricks around and solidified it and went on to say:

"I know it will not be long before all of this is ruined, but whenever a believer does something, Allah likes when he does it in a proper and appropriate form."

Examiner's Tip

When writing about the Prophet's (s) most important actions it would be a good idea to mention some specific examples or historical records.

His Mission

His mission was the perfection of man. He describes the goal of his mission as: "I was chosen to complete moral virtues." The religion which Muhammad (s) introduced to people is a comprehensive program for living which includes both aspects of human's life, i.e. his material and spiritual aspects. In other words, a Muslim is the one who is prosperous both in this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, a collection of individual and social guidelines can be found in the Qur'an, teaching human beings the true way of life and ultimately achieving prosperity. He spent his lifetime on teaching humanity and prepared the grounds for the development and perfection of human beings and ethics by establishing Islamic government. Imam Ali (a) introduced his cousin (the holy Prophet (s)) to people with very beautiful attributes:

"[He is] an itinerant healing doctor.

Summary

The Prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (s) was to bring all aspects of human life to perfection and his activities are too comprehensive to be mentioned here. However, some of his most important achievements, which were recorded by historians during the 23 years of his Prophetic mission are as follows:

- Reviving monotheism and fighting againtst idol-worshipping
- Establishing an Islamic government based on monotheism
- Accomplishment of the divine mission, delivering the word of God (the Qur'an) to people and striving to uphold its laws
- Promoting the value of reason and knowledge and fighting against ignorance and superstitions
- Creating an Islamic culture and civilization
- Explaining and disseminating Divine teachings and training virtuous people
- Establishing moral virtues
- The status of women and strengthening the family foundation
- Establishing equity and brotherhood and introducing faith and piety as the only factors of superiority among human beings
- Fighting against racial and ethnic discrimination

We will discuss more about the mission of the holy Prophet (s) in future units.

The Holy Quran

The Holy Qur'an is the most important source for all Muslims and acts as an instrument of unity. Regardless of their sectarian and cultural backgrounds, all Muslims refer to the same book as the divine guide to govern their lives.

Muslims deny any alteration in the Qur'an and believe that the Qur'an of today is the same that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s).

The Qur'an is a living and eternal reminder (dhikr) which will never die and fall into oblivion. It is immune from any addition or loss and secure from any alteration in form and style, which could affect its character and role as "the Reminder of Allah which expresses divine truth and knowledge."

It is a miracle.

It was demanded of the Prophet (s), as it had been of other prophets, that he produce a miracle. The Prophet (s) also confirmed the power of prophets to produce miracles as has been clearly asserted by the Qur'an. Many of the Prophet's (s) miracles have been recounted and the performance of some have been accepted with confidence. The enduring miracle of the Prophet (s) is still alive and it is the sacred book of Islam, the Holy Qur'an. This sacred text consists of 6236 verses (al-āyah), which are divided into one hundred and fourteen large and small chapters (al-sūrah). The verses of the Holy Qur'an were gradually revealed over the twenty-three years of prophecy and mission of the Prophet (s). From one verse to a whole chapter, they were revealed under different circumstances; during the day and night, on journeys, at home, during war and peace, in days of hardship or moments of rest.

In many of its verses, the Holy Qur'an introduces itself in an unambiguous language, as a miracle. According to the testimony of history, the Arabs had reached the highest stages of eloquence and elegance in verbal expression, in the sweetness of language and flow of speech they ranked among the foremost. The Holy Qur'an invited the Arabs of that day to rivalry and competition in composing writings of comparable truth and beauty. The Holy Qur'an claims that if it be thought of as human speech, created by the Prophet himself or learned through instruction from someone else, then the Arabs should be able to produce its like or ten chapters like it, or a single one of its chapters, making use of whatever means were at their disposal to achieve this end. The Qur'an introduces itself as the Prophet's (s) eternal miracle and challenges all of mankind to bring a book like it, if they have any doubt in it being a miracle. Here, we will briefly analyze the different dimensions to its inimitability.

Links

The definition of 'miracle' and its conditions have been covered in lesson 4, pages 133 - 134.

The Quran's Challenge

The Qur'an shows that from the beginning of its revelation, namely the period in Mecca, it was, as Islamic theologians put it, *mutahaddī*, that is, from when it was revealed, it challenged the people, not only of that day and age and place, but throughout history and everywhere. The Qur'an says:

قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَن يَأْتُواْ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لاَ يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

"Say, "Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another." (17:88)

Key Terms

Tahaddī: Denotes when one challenges others to match him/her in an act, writing or speech. One of the dimensions of the inimitability of the Qur'an is *tahaddī*.

Think About

In your opinion:
- If the enemies of Islam could write a book like the Qur'an, don't you think they would use it against Islam? So why is it that there has never been any significant claim about someone having the ability to match the Qur'an? Is this not a sign that indeed man is incapable of matching this holy Book?

The Essence of the Claim of the Qur'an

In some verses, the Qur'an challenges the deniers of its inimitability to bring ten chapters like those of the Qur'an,

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Do they say," He has fabricated it?" Say," Then bring ten sourahs like it, fabricated, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah, should you be truthful. (11:13)

In other places, it steps even further and says,

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Do they say," He has fabricated it?" Say," Then bring a sourah like it, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah, should you be truthful.(10:38)

What can be concluded from these words of the Qur'an is that the Qur'an has claimed to be a miracle and that does not necessarily mean that it is a miracle only as a complete book, but its chapters and verses are also miracles in their own right.

Discussion Activity

Which characteristics of the Qur'an make it an everlasting miracle for all generations and in all places?
Share your ideas with your fellow classmates in this regard.

The Advantage of the Qur'an over Other Miracles

1. Linguistic

Every endeavor and action represents its doer. For example, a building represents its architect and a rug represents its weaver. Nonetheless, all of these fall short of how speech represents its speaker. A may person see someone's painting and develop an impression about its painter, but upon encountering the painter and listening to him speak, he learns more about the artist and one's impression will change. Therefore, nothing unveils one's personality more accurately than his speech. From this perspective, the speech of the Qur'an is a good introducer of the One dictating it, which is God Almighty.

2. Eternal

Another feature of the Qur'an is its longevity. Nothing is as indelible as speech and the secret behind why verbal expression was chosen as the Prophet's (s) main miracle is due to the fact that since his religion is the seal of all religions, and is a way of life to remain forever. the only thing that has the capability of remaining unchanged is speech. While the miracles of other prophets, such as reviving the dead, splitting the Red Sea, were incidents that were witnessed only by a few people and were recounted afterwards.

The Different Dimensions of the Quran's Inimitability

The Qur'an is a miracle in different ways, meaning that it is beyond the capability of man.

Progress Tracking

Note that, in the Holy Quran, there are three types of challenges which God has posed to humans and which expose the inability of man to produce something like the Quran and thus prove the miraculous nature of the Quran. The challenges in the Quran are in these three forms, that if all the humans and jinn come together, they could not bring the like of: 1) the Quran 2) 10 chapters of the Quran and 3) one chapter of the Quran.

Web Links

To learn what other scholars have said about the Qur'an, refer to the following link: http://www.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=65736

First: Literary Inimitability:

The literary inimitability of the Qur'an is connected with art and beauty. What is interesting is that the beauty of the Qur'an has no limits in space nor time. Many of the existing beautiful texts were written in a particular period and do not resonate with other epochs, or are strictly in harmony with a nation's cultural background; the Qur'an on the other hand, does not belong to a specific time, ethnicity or culture.

All of those who have become acquainted with the language of the Qur'an found it to be in conformity with their disposition. No matter how much time elapses or how many nations become familiar with it, people are always drawn towards the beauty of the Qur'an.

Since its advent fourteen centuries ago, Islam's enemies have made painstaking efforts to undermine its status, such as ascribing alteration to it, or formulating chapters that match its chapters, but have failed to answer the challenge of the Qur'an.

Two Orientalists provide their observations in the following examples:

E. H. Palmer says, "the best of Arab writers have never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an" (*Palmer*, IV)

The famous Arabist H. Gibb asserts that:

> ...the Meccans still demanded of him a miracle, and with remarkable boldness and self-confidence Mohammad appealed as a supreme confirmation of his mission to the Koran itself. Like all Arabs they were the connoisseurs of language and rhetoric. Well, then if the Koran were his own composition other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not), then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding evident miracle. (*Gibb*, 28)

Elsewhere he asserts:

> As a literary monument the Koran thus stands by itself, a production unique to Arabic literature, having neither forerunners nor successors in its own idiom. Muslims of all ages are united in proclaiming the inimitability not only of its contents but also of its style...and in forcing the high Arabic idiom into the expression of new ranges of thought the Koran develops a bold and strikingly effective rhetorical prose in which all the resources of syntactical modulation are exploited with great freedom and originality. (*Gibb*, 36)

Interestingly, even the Prophet's own words – through whom the Qur'an was revealed – differ from those of the Qur'an. Many words have been narrated by the Prophet in the form of sermons, supplications, sayings and traditions and are at the peak of eloquence, yet none have the style of the Qur'an. This by itself shows that the Qur'an and the personal words of the Prophet come from two different sources.

The word structure in the Qur'an is unmatched; no one has ever been able to alternate its words without damaging its beauty or to pen something like it.

Some aspects of the literary beauty of the Qur'an:

1. Eloquent, but not Poetry

One of the facets of the inimitability of the Qur'an is its eloquence. Its articulation is of refinement, and beauty is something to be sensed, not described. For example, no one has been able to come up with a formula for visual beauty; rather, it is a sense in each individual that is associated with one's heart and feelings, not knowledge and intellect. For this reason the content of poetry does not have to be accurate, all that matters, when it comes to poetic beauty is the outer literary form. It has been said that, "the best of poetry is the most false of it"; meaning that poetry which contains the greatest false exaggerations is the most beautiful. All these factors support the notion of the inimitability of the Qur'an, in that, while it bears the utmost beauty, its style has nothing to do with the poetic form, exaggeration and falsehood. The Qur'an is neither poetry nor prose. It is not poetry because it does not rhyme the way poetry does nor have the imaginary side to it that poetry usually contains. Poetry revolves around exaggeration which is a type of falsehood, but in the Qur'an, there are no imaginary analogies and metaphors. Neither is it prose, due to its harmony and rhythm, which is unprecedented in all other prose and to this day Muslims continuously recite it with this special cadence.

2. The Qur'an's Approach to analogy

What lends itself to the beauty of speech is the use of analogies therein; the reason being that when one thing is likened to another, the two are made 'partners' and this is what arouses awe. Interestingly, the Qur'an does not utilize this technique and yet it remains very intriguing. Therefore, another dimension of the Qur'an's inimitability is that this important tool which man uses to embellish his speech is rarely utilized by the Quran and yet, it remains captivating.

3. Its Ability to take on Rhythm

As far as different languages are concerned, it is only poetry that can be rhythmic. Of course, any prose can be sung out loud, but even those who have no background in music can tell that prose is to be read rather than recited with rhythm. Yet, there are some prose that can take on rhythm. What is meant by them being capable of taking on rhythm is that their message is better conveyed when recited with rhythm rather than without. The Qur'an's structure is not the same as poetry, because it does not rhyme nor are all of its syllables in harmony. Its content does not resemble that of poetry either, because poetry is dependent upon the imagination, while the Qur'an is devoid of all poetic imagination. The Qur'an is the only rhythmic prose that exists. Religious teachings instruct us to recite the Qur'an with a pleasant rhythm; a flow inspiring spirituality, not one witnessed in the gatherings of amusement.

The sayings of the Prophet (s) cannot be recited in such a manner and cannot take on any rhythm.

The reason why Islam encourages reciting the Qur'an with a rhythm is because it bears this capability, is receptive to it and can be better manifested through it.

Reference

If you wish to know more about the different aspects of the literary inimitability of the Qur'an, please refer to page 49 in the book, *Word of God*, by Dr. Shomali. The book is available at the following address: www.pureislam.org

Web Links

To know more about the attraction of the Qur'an visit the following web site:
www.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=193170&KEYWORD=quran

4. The Sweetness of the Qur'an

Another feature of the Qur'an is its sweetness. Meaning the attractiveness it has for the person reading it and how it is in harmony with his/her nature, such that one's thirst for it is never quenched. In Islam recitation of the Qur'an is of high importance; this import owes itself to the structure and beauty of the Qur'an, because these words differ from other words. If you hear the same message through another means or structure, it will not have the same sway and influence as when you hear it through the words of the Qur'an.

No matter how much this sweetness is repeated, it does not decrease, and this is also one of the miraculous aspects of the Qur'an.

Second: Harmony and Proportionality of the Qur'an

The harmony and proportionality of the Qur'an in view of its form and meaning is another aspect of its inimitable nature. The Qur'an says: "Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy" (4: 82).

In explaining this dimension of the inimitability of the Qur'an it should be noted that every human being goes through two different types of transformations in life: 1) Is her personal development, where her knowledge increases with age. The evidence of this can be seen in the contradictions of her thoughts and understanding which are eventually reflected in her speech 2) Are the different incidents that take place in a person's life, which initiate emotional, sentimental, and psychological states that, in turn, lead to hope, sadness, happiness, peacefulness, and absurdity. These are the factors that bring about change in man's speech. If it were to be assumed that the Qur'an is the work of the holy Prophet of Islam (s), who went through so many traumas in his life, then the effects of these would certainly have been reflected in his miracle. However, no such evidence can be found in the Qur'an and this becomes another proof for the inimitability of the Qur'an.

In relation to the empirical sciences, one must keep in mind that the Qur'an is not a scientific book providing practical knowledge, and in addition, the empirical sciences are always changing on the basis of new research.

Furthermore, the Qur'an also tells of the unseen (al-ghayb) and of future events. This does not include only the precise details provided about the history of Moses, Jesus, the People of Cave (Seven Sleepers), etc. A significant proportion of the Qur'an focuses on history, contemporary times and on the future. These events have occurred exactly as outlined by the Qur'an. Moreover, they were not mentioned in an ambiguous fashion or in a symbolic way. The Qur'an is consistent and concurrently composed of different types of knowledge. For example, it is not simply a history book but comprises a vast range of subject matters (would you like to add some subjects?). Furthermore, the Qur'an is a divine Book; its meanings and words are both revealed by God and protected by Him, as He says in the Qur'an: "Certainly, We sent the Reminder and We will protect it" (9:15). Professor Neuwirth, a contemporary Islamist, bases his argument on similar grounds and asserts in his essay, The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an:

> "The Qur'anic text transmitted to us betrays a peculiar composition, essentially different from that of the Hebrew Bible, which pursues salvation history through a roughly chronological sequence of events, and equally different from the Gospels that narrate essential stages of the founding history of Christian faith The Qur'an does not present a continuous narrative of the past, but in its early text conjures the future, the imminent day

of judgment, and later on enters into debate with various interlocutors about the implementation of monotheist scripture in the present" (Neuwirth, 97).

The Scholars in the past and present have recognized the substantial amount discussed in a proportional and harmonious manner. This proportionality and harmoniousness is not only related to past and future events, but also contains what is required by every human being to be guided and live a prosperous life.

Reference

You can refer to the research of Dr. Maurice Bucaille, *The Bible, the Qur 'an and Science* to learn more about the empirical scientific aspect of Qur'anic knowledge. Note: Based on what has been said in this chapter, the research of Dr. Bucaille cannot be considered to be absolute, although it is a good source.

Third: Intellectual and Scientific Inimitability:

The Qur'an's inimitability from this perspective calls for a broad discussion, but it can also be analyzed concisely. It must be noted that the noble Prophet of Islam (s) in particular and all the other prophets in general have different personalities but they are; neither philosophers, nor scholars, nor poets, nor historians, nor industrialists, nor artists. But at the same time, they possess all these merits and more. The Qur'an is a divinely inspired book and is not a book of philosophy, science, history, artwork, nor literature and yet it possesses the characteristics of all the above and more.

The Qur'an is a book of guidance to humankind and in reality, is the book of 'humans'; man being the one whom God has created and the prophets have come to introduce to Him, and to teach humanity the path to their salvation. The human that man knows through the sciences is the individual stationed between birth and death, while what transpires before birth and after death is dark territory unknown to the material sciences. The man of the Qur'an on the other hand, has no unknown territory; he comes from one world, must develop himself in this world, and his hereafter depends on how much effort or laziness he exhibits in this world. The man of the Qur'an needs to know:

where he has come from, where he is now, what he must accomplish and where he is headed.

It is only when he can correctly answer these four questions that he can secure his true salvation in this life and the next world.

In addition to all of the above, the human of the Qur'an must believe in a series of unseen and non-tangible creatures (which the Qur'an collectively refers to as *al-ghayb*) as the manifestations and channels of divine will in this world of existence, and must know that God Almighty has never left man, who is need of divine guidance, to himself, rather, He has sent elite individuals to convey God's message to mankind.

Lastly, the Qur'an also makes statements regarding the natural sciences. For example, it has spoken about the wind, rain, earth, the sky and animals. Modern scientists have focused mainly on these issues the Qur'an speaks about and have tried to prove that what the Qur'an says complies with science has gradual discoveries of science. We should not rush when it comes to applying scientific theories to Qur'anic verses, because later on, the inaccuracy of a theory may be proven. Nonetheless, there are many examples of these scientific miracles in the Qur'an. As a matter of fact, the scientific content of the Qur'an comprises those things that are discovered over time and will understood in the future. The Qur'an is continuously being unearthed by man because what we discover today regarding its miracles and content, beauty, science or intelligence are more than what was known ten centuries ago.

Reference

If you wish to know more about the unschooled Prophet (s) and historical evidence for him being so, please refer to the book, *The Unschooled Prophet* by Āyatullah Murtada Mutahhari. You can find this book here: www.pureislam.org

Delivered by the Unschooled Prophet

One of the definite characteristics of the holy Prophet of Islam (s) which no one can deny is that the Prophet (s) was "ummī" i.e. he had not written, nor studied and had not he been taught by any teacher. This fact is so definite and clear that famous western orientalists have mentioned it in their books. Stating that such words which are of such extreme eloquence and fluency and contain the secrets of the universe, show that it is a divine work and this knowledge is gained through revelation. In this regard the holy Qur'an says:

"You were not able to read or write before the Qur'an was revealed to you; however, the followers of falsehood would have tried to confuse the matter" (29:48)

The Etiquettes of Recitation:

The Holy Quran is the best and most important blessing that God has bestowed upon humans. In the first few verses of the chapter Al-Rahman it says:

"The All-Beneficent has taught the Quran. He created man, [and] taught him articulate speech." (55:1-4)

The human reaches to his/her ultimate perfection in the light of the teachings of God and through receiving and considering the Quran. Because the Quran is the source of all riches and the means to receive blessings, both material and spiritual, God has given it precedence in these verses, due to its importance, even though man was created prior to the revelation of the Qur'an.

One of the most fundamental missions of the Prophet (s) was the recitation of the Quran to the people. Therefore, the first step in benefitting from the Quran is the recitation of its verses. We will briefly describe some of the properties of the recitation of the Holy Quran:.

1 – Speaking with the Lord

The Quran is God's letter and the way to gain familiarity with Him is to read His words. According to Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as): God has revealed Himself through his speech to humanity.

2 – Utilising the Qur'an as a source of guidance.

Recitation of the Quran paves the way for guidance and spiritual elevation; this is because we become familiar with the commands, prohibitions and instructions of God and try to act according to that which has been commanded and abstain from what has been prohibited. Pious Muslims regard the recitation of the Quran to be the introduction to action and Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as) regarded the true recitation to be taking lessons from the Quran and submitting to and complying with its commandments.

3 – Encouragement to develop characteristics necessary for the utilisation of the Quran

The Quran considers its specific guidance to be especially for the pious.

These virtuous individuals are adorned with traits such as staying awake at nights, humility in worship, patience in difficulty, forgiveness, integrity and being thankful for divine blessings. The reciter of the Quran, when reading these required traits, will be desirous of acquiring them.

4 – Making the decision to refrain from committing sin(s).

Through recitation of the Quran, a person will taste the joy of understanding its verses and when faced with obstacles in comprehending the Quran he will be determined to overcome them. One of the most fundamental hurdles in understanding the Quran is due to the heart of a person being contaminated with sin. Therefore, by reciting the Quran, a person will stay away from sin.

5 – Response to supplication

Permanent familiarity with the Quran provides honour to the reciter and, in respect to this companionship and friendship of God, he will blessed with much good in this world and the next world. In a hadith of Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as), he relates that God says: "Whoever, instead of requesting from me, spends his time in My remembrance, I will give him the highest amount."

6– Cause of Enlightenment

Recitation of the Quran causes a person to become enlightened and heavenly. The holy Prophet (s), in advising Abū Dhar, said: "Recite the Quran and remember God much, because recitation of the Quran causes you to be remembered in the heavens and is the source for your enlightenment in this world."

These are only some of the benefits to becoming acquainted with the Word of God and which cause us to become ever more attracted to its text. This is besides the essential sweetness and beauty of the Quran which is known to those most acquainted with it. Āyatullah Mutahharī, regarding the need for familiarity and understanding of the Quran, says:

The study and knowledge of the Quran is essential for every learned person as well as for all faithful believers. It is especially essential for those scholars who are interested in the study of man and society, since this book has been effectively instrumental not only in moulding the destinies of Islamic societies, but also in shaping the destiny of the human race as a whole. A brief glance over history would be enough to provide sufficient proof of the claim that there has been no such book that has ever influenced human societies to the magnitude of the Quran. It is for the same reason that the Quran automatically steps into the precincts of sociological discussions, and becomes the elemental constituent of the subjects of research in this discipline. This means that any deep study and research in the field of world history generally, and of Islamic societies in particular, during the last fourteen hundred years, is impossible without the knowledge of the Quran.

The study of the Quran is essential for every committed Muslim, since it is the main source and foundation of the religious thought and faith. Whatsoever gives meaning, essence and sanctity to his existence lies in the Holy Quran.

The Qur'an formulates the tenets of faith besides communicating the ideas and views that are essential for a man of faith and belief. Similarly, it also lays down the principles of moral and ethical values for the purpose of social and familial existence. It leaves the job of explanation, interpretation, and occasionally that of *ijtihad* and application of principles (al-usūl) to secondary matters (al-furū') to be dealt with through ijtihad and sunnah. Accordingly, utilization of any other source depends on the prior knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the criterion and standard for judging all other sources. We should judge hadith and sunnah in the light of the Qur'an. We can accept it only when it is in accordance with the Qur'an, otherwise we do not accept it.

Discussion Activity

Why do you think the cognitive and spiritual etiquettes of the Qur'an are more important than its external ones? Share your ideas with fellow classmates in this regard.

This all bears witness to the fact that man must place the Quran and its deep teachings as the cornerstone of all activities in his life and with continuous recitation and reflection and contemplation on its verses he opens the way for individual and social well-being. Unfortunately, occasionally it is seen in some families that they use the Quran only for recitation in some special ceremonies, whereas the Quran has been, is, and will be, the perfect program for life and the means of salvation and solving the problems of humanity. It is also occasionally seen that some persons only recite the Quran and do not pay attention to its sublime meanings and teachings. Of course recitation in itself is good; however the mentioned benefits of recitation of the Quran are mainly for those who combine their recitation with thinking about its teachings and are able to find its key truths.

Recitation of the Qur'an has some outward etiquettes, such as being with wuḍu, facing the qiblah, brushing the teeth before, etc. Although these etiquettes are important and are encouraged to be observed, but more important than these are the etiquettes of a true recitation:

الَّذينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلاوَتِهِ أُولئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ مَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولئِكَ هُمُ الْخاسِرُونَ

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read. These believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers. (2:121)

A proper recitation of the Qur'an bears the following:

1. Recitation at a steady pace and in the form of *tartīl*.

وَ رَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتيلا

And recite the Qur'an in a measured tone. (73:4)

Tartīl in origin means to organize and put in a coherent order, and in this context means to recite the verses at a steady pace and with necessary order, and correct pronunciation of its letters, and clear enunciation of its words, and concentration on the concepts and messages of the verses, and reflection on their lessons.

2. Recitation in the heart of the night has more of an impact. When describing the pious, Imam ʻAlī (a) says:

أَمَّا اللَّيلُ فصافُّونَ أقدامَهُم تالِينَ لِأجزاءِ القُرآنِ يُرَتِّلُونَهُ تَرتِيلاً

During the night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured manner. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon of Muttaqīn [191])

3. Reflection and understanding its complexities and profundities

كِتابٌ أَنزَلناهُ إِلَيكَ مُبارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آياتِهِ

(It is) a book that we have sent down to you, so that they may contemplate its signs, and those who possess intellect may take admonition. (38:17)

4. إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَ إِذا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آياتُهُ زادَتْهُمْ إِيماناً وَ عَلى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

Indeed the faithful are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned. And when His signs are recited to them, their faith increases, and who put their trust in their Lord.(8:2)

Key Terms

Al-Wuḍu: is the Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for prayers and reciting Qur'an.

Al-Qiblah : is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during salah. It is fixed towards the direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca

Web Links

See the following link to know about seven tips for improving your relationship with the holy Qur'an.
http://www.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=92195&KEYWORD

When describing the pious, Imam ʻAlī (a) says:

يُحَزِّنُونَ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُم وَ يَستَثِيرُونَ بِهِ دَوآءَ دآئِهِم

Creating through it [the Qur'an] grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon of Muttaqīn [191])

They turn to the Qur'an the same way an ailing person seeks a cure, and that is why their recitation is with grief and with worry over whether or not they will be cured or not. This state raises one's reflection and contemplation, and prepares them like a thirsty person about to be quenched.

وَ استَشفُوا بِنُورِهِ فَإِنَّهُ شِفآءُ الصُّدُورِ

And seek your cure through its light for it is indeed the cure of the hearts. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 108)

5. Having hope in its glad tidings and fear of its warnings.
6. Learning and taking lessons from the stories of the Qur'an.
7. Acting upon all of its guidelines and laws.

Summary

The Holy Qur'an is the final divine book and the enduring miracle of the Prophet of Islam (s).

In order to prove its truth, Allah Almighty has invited others to match it.

The Qur'an is inimitable from different perspectives; the literary and scientific being two of the most important ones.

The Qur'an has special characteristics setting it apart from other divine miracles. Being speech, eternal, sweet, beautiful and taking on rhythm, not like that of poetry.

Reciting the Qur'an befittingly has its own etiquettes which the Qur'an has pointed to. Reciting with *tartīl* and a good voice are some of the etiquettes.

Making the most of its recitation depends on thought and reflection on its verses, something that different verses and traditions have pointed out.

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Seal of Prophethood

ما كانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أبا أحَدٍ مِنْ رِجالِكُمْ وَ لكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ خاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَ كانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَليماً

"Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets and Allah has knowledge of all things."(33:40)

The term *al-khātam* derives from the root KH T M, meaning 'to end'. An analysis of its definition in dictionaries and different usages in the Qur'an shows that the term denotes what is used to end a matter or activity, and also what is used to seal letters and the like. It is for this same reason that the same term is also used for 'ring', because in the past, rings with impressions engraved on them were used as signets to seal letters and important documents.

According to this noble verse, the Prophet of Islam (s) is the final link of the chain of divine prophets after whom no other prophet will be sent.

Although the aforementioned verse is sufficient for proving this point, the proof for the Prophet of Islam (s) being the seal of prophethood is not limited to it and there are other Qur'anic verses and numerous traditions to support this.

In addition to what was said above, there are many traditions that convey the sealing of prophethood:

The Prophet (s) has said:

What I have declared as permissible, will be permissible until the Day of Resurrection, and what I have declared as forbidden, will be forbidden until the Day of Resurrection. (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, hadith 17.)

The famous tradition of *al-Manzilah* regarding the story of the Prophet (s) mobilizing forces toward the battle of Tabūk and what he told Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) in explanation of the reason for leaving him behind, clearly highlights the finality of his prophethood:

"Your position (al-manzilah) in relation to me is like that of Aaron to Moses, except that after me there will be no other prophet."

Activity

Can you find the difference between a nabi (Prophet) and a rasūl (messenger) using Qur'anic verses? To find the answer, you can refer to the following: (2:213), (3:81), (4:165). Write down your findings in 300-400 words.

Discussion Activity

Discuss with your friends what eternal haram or halal means. Does this mean that no Islamic laws are changeable?

A Question

Belief in the Prophet (s) being the seal of prophethood may give rise to the question, "If there is no limit and boundary to the perfection of man and all people in every era are in need of a guide, then how can prophethood be sealed and the masses deprived of the leadership of new prophets?"

The answer to this question lies in the fact that it is possible for humanity to reach a level of cultural and intellectual maturity, enabling it to continue on its path to perfection through continuous implementation of the comprehensive principles and teachings left at its disposal by the final prophet, without any need for a new religion. As a matter of fact, in order that man be able to traverse this path full of ups and downs towards proximity to God, what the previous prophets did was present a part of the map to humanity, until it reached a level to deserving the comprehensive map through the final prophet with access to the entire plan, there is no longer a need for another messenger from God, Almighty.

Of course, one might think that as time goes on, the needs of humans are constantly changing, thereby, bringing new requirements, while the final religion only comprises of stable and unchanging precepts, and as a result, since these new needs have not been addressed in the Qur'an and traditions, making such a religion inefficient and useless. But if one pays close attention, he will conclude that a change in man's needs does not result in the religion being deficient. If Islamic laws were all specific in the sense that it had counted every single issue in its particularity and assigned a ruling to it, then such a problem would hold, but that is not the case, rather, in Islamic thought, there is a set of general and very broad principles applicable to variable needs, which leaves no room for the aforementioned problem.

For example, as time passes, new forms of legal relations and contracts develop between people that never existed during the time the Qur'an was revealed. During the Prophet's time there was no such thing as insurance and all its different branches; the only thing was the general principle of 'the obligation to fulfill one's vow and contract', which is a Qur'anic principle that covers cases like insurance. Of course there are other conditions and criteria for this principle that must be met as well. Therefore, there is a general rule in this regard, although its instances may vary by the day.

Activity

Can you give a few examples of Islamic laws that have changed over time? What is meant by 'secondary laws'?

Succession of the Prophet (s)

After the passing away of the Prophet (s), the Muslims were divided into two groups over the succession of the Prophet (s): one group believed that Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) had been directly appointed by the Prophet (s) as his successor, and the other believes in the appointment of Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfah as per his election at the council held in Saqīfah.

Progress Tracking

In the Sunni school, there are books in which the most authentic traditions of the Prophet (s) can be found. The Sunni school consider *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, *Sahīh Muslim*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan Tirmidhī*, *Sunan Nisā'ī*, and *Sunan Ibn Mājah* as the most important sources of tradition.
In the Shia school, *al-Kāfī*, *Man Lā Yahḍuruh al-Faqīh*, *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibsār* are the most important sources of tradition.

The Sunni School of Thought

Key Terms

What is meant by imamate here is confined to political succession and not Imamate in its specific sense, which denotes leadership of the people in all their affairs, or divine vicegerency.

According to the Sunni school of thought, after the Prophet of Islam (s), the true imam was Abū Bakr. They believe that there are two ways for appointing the successor of the Prophet (s):

The first is for the Prophet (s) to appoint the imam explicitly and directly, but according to them there is no such direct appointment in this regard and the Prophet(s) did not appoint a successor and delegated this matter to the Muslims themselves.

The second is for there to be a consensus (ijmā'). Since he had not appointed anyone as his successor, after the passing of the Prophet (s), it was the consensus of the Muslim nation that Abū Bakr be the successor. Actually, in the beginning, there was a consensus regarding three individuals, meaning that there was a consensus that the succession of one of three individuals was legitimate: Abū Bakr, Ali and Abbas. Since Ali and Abbas did not object to the caliphate of Abū Bakr, consensus was with Abū Bakr, because if this was not the case, Ali and Abbas would have objected. According to this account, there is no text and tradition on the legitimacy of the caliphate of Abū Bakr and the only reason for his caliphate is consensus. Of course, there are different opinions regarding whether such a consensus was among all the Muslims or only a certain group. Some believe that the consensus of the experts on the caliphate of Abū Bakr suffices.

Some Sunni scholars, such as Faḍl ibn Rūzbahān, do not consider being the most virtuous to be one of the conditions of caliphate. This group is in no need of proving his virtue over the rest, but at the same time, there are some Sunni scholars who believe that one must be higher than the rest to be imam, and that is why they engage in proving his virtue over the rest of the companions.

In any event, after Abū Bakr, 'Umar ibn Khattāb assumed the caliphate through Abu Bakr's appointment. After this, in his last days, the second caliph put together a six person council governed by specific protocols determined by the caliph himself; the outcome of this council was the caliphate of 'Uthmān. After the assassination of 'Uthmān, the masses went to 'Alī ibn Abī Talib (as) and pledged their allegiance to him as the caliph. After the assassination of the fourth caliph, his son, Hasan ibn 'Alī took on the caliphate, with Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān claiming the same position simultaneously; he had even gone to battle with the fourth caliph for this position but had failed. This time though, he succeeded in defeating the army of Hasan ibn 'Alī and signed a peace treaty with Hasan ibn 'Alī, and assumed the caliphate. From then on, for several generations, the Umayyids held on to power until they were overthrown by the 'Abbāsids who stayed in power for a long time.

The Succession of the Prophet from the Shia School's Perspective:

The Shia school affirms that the Prophet (s) explicitly made mention of his (s) successor and it is not acceptable to say that a prophet who would appoint someone to take his place when he would leave the city for a short period, would neglect the future of his people and not appoint a successor. Even the second caliph appointed a successor after himself. For example, according to the Qur'an, in the first days of his prophethood, the Prophet (s) was ordered to call his close relatives to Islam; he told them, "Whosoever answers my call first, will be my vizier, successor and heir." Ali (a) was the first to answer this call and the Prophet (s) accepted his faith and vowed to fulfill his promise. Usually it is impossible for the leader of a movement to introduce one of his followers as his successor to outsiders, but not to his closest and most loyal companions, or for him to have the intention to make him his vizier, but then throughout the lifetime of his mission, to isolate him from the responsibilities of a vizier, neglect his position and respect as a successor and place no distinction between him and the rest without reason.

These are a few of the many traditions on the outstanding merits and virtues of Ali ibn Abī tālib and it is due to his position and status in the eyes of the Prophet (s), his companions and the Muslims, that his followers deemed it clear that caliphate and authority belong to Ali after the Prophet's (s) passing, but contrary to their expectations, such a thing did not take place.

Also, another example would be the event of Ghadīr Khum, in which the noble Prophet (s) declared the general authority of Ali over the people and made Ali the guardian of the people, those for whom he himself (the Prophet) was guardian. The Shia believe that the Prophet (s) explicitly appointed his successor and there was no room for any consultation and consensus. Secondly, there was no consensus on the caliphate of Abu Bakr to begin with and that there was objection to this matter by some of the great companions namely Ali and his supporters; 'Abbās, Zubayr, Salmān, Abūdhar, Miqdād and 'Ammār.

The Shia believe that after Ali ibn Abī Tālib, his son, Hasan ibn Ali and after him, his second son, Husayn ibn Ali, and after him, nine individuals from the progeny of Husayn were Imams one after another, the last of them being the Mahdī; one whom the Prophet (s) has referred to as the 'promised one' who will fill the world with justice. He is alive at the moment and is in occultation. Of course, it is noteworthy that in Shia thought, Imamate is not hereditary; on the contrary, the purest individual in every era assumes imamate; every one of these Imams who reached the status of Imamate had been raised under the care of the previous Imam and reached that necessary level of perfection. Therefore, they reached this position due to their merits and existential conditions and qualifications, although it is clear that other hereditary matters did indeed contribute to their perfection, such as the purity and chastity of their fathers and mothers.

Think About !

Please pay attention that the enemies of Islam have always capitalized on this historical difference between the Sunni and Shia schools to their own sinister interests. Thus, it should be kept in mind that these discussions should only be presented in order to become more familiar with the beliefs of these two schools and not spark yet another quarrel. In your opinion, what are some ways these two schools can get closer?

Reading Comprehension

1) How does Allah describe the Prophet (s) in the Holy Qur'an and what attributes does He ascribe to him?

2) Explain how the Prophet of Islam (s), while being soft also possessed firmness.

3) How did the Prophet (s) deal with the issue of slavery during his time?

4) What were some of the most significant accomplishments made during the Prophet's (s) 23 year mission?

5) What are some advantages that the Holy Qur'an holds compared to other miracles?

6). In the Holy Quran, how many types of challenge are there?

7) Explain the harmony and proportionality of the Qur'an.

8) What does the word khÁtam literally mean and how is it associated with the Holy Prophet (s)?

9) If there is no limit to the perfection of man and all people in every era are in need of a guide, then how can prophethood be sealed and the masses deprived of the leadership of new prophets?

Objectives

To Learn About:

- The role and importance of the Hereafter
- The arguments in support of the Hereafter
- Aspects of the Soul
- The reality of death and the human response to it, Al-Barzakh and the Day of Resurrection
- Divine Justice

One of the primary beliefs within all revealed religions is that the life of a human being is not terminated by death and that there is a continuation to life after it. The divine prophets had placed much emphasis upon this principle and underwent many hardships in order to establish this belief in people's hearts. In the Holy Qur'an, belief in resurrection is placed alongside belief in the one God, and more than two thousand verses have spoken in regards to the hereafter. Other than verses of the Qur'an, intellectual proofs can be used to prove the issue of resurrection.

The Hereafter and Personal Life

In ancient times, when the telescope and spacecraft had not yet been invented, no one had knowledge about the massive galaxies. No one had the desire to go to planets such as Pluto or Saturn for the simple reason that people did not have knowledge about these planets or boundless galaxies. However, today with the help of sophisticated technology, humanity is able to observe these planets, gigantic stars and the scientific expeditions to, and studies of these phenomena are constantly increasing.

The motivation for life's activities, provision of needs and desires, achievement of values and ideals, attainment of prosperity and perfection, and the manner of realising these, are all dependent upon the recognition of aims, to which efforts in life are directed at achieving. Therefore, a person who knows that the goal of life has a fundamental role, will choose and performing his/her actions accordingly. But, a person who considers himself to be simply a collection of material elements, that his life is temporary in this world, and who does not have knowledge of, or belief in the existence of another world, is like the person who lived in ancient times and was ignorant of the glorious galaxies and therefore did not attempt to seek them out or benefit from them. This type of person would direct their energy to only provide for the needs and desires of this world. However, a person who regards herself as being more than material matter, does not consider death to be the end of life but rather a point of transition from this fleeting world, and sees that her behaviour is the means to reach eternal prosperity and perfection, would live her life in a way that would benefit her in the eternal life. On the other hand, difficulties and failures in this life would not leave her without hope and she would never stop her efforts in performing duties and striving to attain eternal bliss and perfection.

Discussion Activity

If we look at the daily routines of humans, we will see that there are many commonalities between them: eating and drinking, working, having fun, sleeping, etc. In fact, the difference between humans is in the various aims of their activities. What is your aim in carrying out these activities? Do you only carry out these actions out of habit? Or, do you have a higher aim or objective? Do these goals have an impact on your way of living? How?
Share your answers with your partners and try to explain your reason

Activity

Refer to the following verses and see how God, the All-Glorious speaks about the rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Write your understanding of the verses in at least three lines.
6:160, 16:97, 21:47, 99:7-8

The Hereafter and Social Life

Conviction in the existence of life after death, in addition to influencing man's personal life, also has a considerable impact on his social life and interactions with others. Belief in the hereafter and its eternal rewards and punishments, plays an important role in his observance of the rights of others and encourages acts of generosity towards those in need. In a society where this belief is prevalent, implementing just laws and regulations and preventing the oppression and abuse of others, would require less coercive measures. Naturally, on the international level, this ideology would significantly reduce problems between nations. For example, if a person knows that by being kind to his fellow human beings, coupled with the rewards he would receive in this world, knowing that he will receive rewards ten times greater in the afterlife, it stands to reason that he would have a stronger incentive to be good to others. Likewise, if he comprehends that by committing bad deeds, he will be subject to punishment and condemnation in this world and the hereafter, it is obvious that he would perform fewer undesirable actions.

In consideration of these points, the belief in monotheism cannot have a full and extensive impact on placing order in one's life, if it stands alone without faith in the day of resurrection.

Arguments for the Hereafter

The plea of wisdom and the assertion of justice are two arguments used for proving resurrection, which we will discuss in brevity.

Examiner's Tip

Explain the argument of wisdom in your own words. It is recommended to mention verse (23:115) in your answer.

The Argument of Wisdom

Suppose that someone wants to construct a building on a piece of land in two months time. It is spring, he has brought a tractor and begins to plough and seed the land. Two months later, the seeds have germinated and have grown, but have not reached the harvesting stage. At this time he brings a bulldozer and starts excavating the land. To this person, we would say that their initial work was futile.

If there is no resurrection, it means that man is destroyed during the first step of creation, while his perfection in this world has not yet been manifested. Given the aptitude and excellence that God has placed in humans, if he is limited to a 60 to 70 year life span, then this act of creation would be futile.

In the previous sections we proved that God is Wise and that He does not do anything in vain. Accordingly, there must be a resurrection which gives purpose to this great creation, for it not to be reduced to a means of entertainment for its Creator.

This argument is as follows: God is Wise. A person who is wise does not perform any action without reason nor in vain. On this basis, can it be imagined that God created this great universe only for His entertainment? Then, afterwards, destroys it and everything comes to an end? The same intellect which says that the Creator of this magnificent universe is Wise, also says that He must have had an aim in its creation. Undoubtedly, God had an objective in creating this world, which must be manifest in another time and space. That place is the hereafter and Day of Resurrection. In the Qur'an, God says:

أَ فَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَ أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لا تُرْجَعُونَ

'Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?' (23:115)

Links

To recall the topics related to Divine Wisdom, refer to Lesson 2, page 39.

Activity

Think about the content of verse 115 of chapter 23.
- What is meant by "not created aimlessly"?
- What is meant by "brought back"?

Write down your ideas in at least three lines.

Think About

Compare human perfections with the perfections of other creatures. What differences exist between them? In your opinion, what is the reason for these differences? Can a human being reach sincerely strive towards all the perfections which are expected of him?

Explanation

The consideration of two premises can be useful in better understanding this argument:

- God's creation is not in vain and without purpose as God is absolute perfection and loves goodness and excellence. For this reason, His intentions towards His creatures is to have grace and sublimity and has created the world in such a way that excellence follows from it. God has actualized all creatures so that they can realize their innate potentiality and achieve their ultimate perfection.
- Humans have an immortal soul and can possess eternal perfections, which in terms of their status and value, are incomparable to material perfections and have no limits. Man desires to reach to infinity in all dimensions of his life: in knowledge, power, beauty etc. and desires to have an eternal life. This pursuit of perfection was created within him by God and so man by his very nature strives towards this ideal. If his life was limited to this worldly life, it would not be consistent with divine wisdom. This is because:

Discussion Activity

Mention some examples for:

- The conflicts between the perfections of different beings.
- The situations where gaining a perfection or pleasure requires some hardships and difficulties.

How could disbelief in a supernatural world lead to suicide?

Share your examples and answers with your partners.

1. The material world is constantly fluctuating meaning that the excellencies of material creatures clash with each other. For example, in order to meet his nutritional needs and support the growth of his body, the human being is compelled to eat the flesh of some animals and some plants. This means that to achieve perfection of the body, the human is dependent upon halting the life and perfections of other creatures.
2. The worldly life is fraught with hardship, trials and unpleasantness. Often, the enjoyment of something pleasurable is entangled with trouble and suffering, such that some have concluded that the endurance of these sufferings is not worth it to achieve limited pleasures! This conclusion has led to emptiness in some people's lives and certain people who have an innate desire to live have turned to suicide. Typically, these individuals do not believe in a world beyond the material world.

Therefore, another world must exist where humans can satisfy their desires and achieve their perfections. God, the Wise, has placed the capacity and desire to achieve these ideals within the human and wants him/her to be successful in attainting them.

Examiner's Tip

When mentioning the premises of an argument, use examples to illustrate the points. You need to explain your reason for each premise.

Progress Tracking

It was clear that the eternal life of man should have another system which does not involve the suffering of this world. Otherwise, the continuation of this earthly life, even if it was possible for it to be forever, would be inconsistent with divine wisdom.

ment of Wisdom

- God has defined a specific perfection for every creature and has placed the ability to reach that perfection within it.
- God has formed creatures in a manner that they have the desire and enthusiasm to achieve their own perfection.
- The creation of the human was such that he strives for absolute and infinite perfection.
- The achievement of these perfections must be possible. If not, the creation of these traits within creatures would have been futile.
- God, the All-Wise, does not perform any vain and futile actions; He desires all creatures to reach to their perfections.
- Attainment of all perfections, that the human is in pursuit of, is not possible in this world.

Another world must exist that has the capacity to meet these inherent aspirations of the human.

The Argument of Justice

Essentially, the purpose for creating the human being in this world and instilling within him opposing tendencies, free will, intellectual and narrational knowledge, providing the context for various behaviours to be exhibited and putting in front of him truth and falsehood, and good and evil is for him to be subjected to multiple tests. He is able to choose the path to his perfection with his own will and obtain the results of his self-determined actions: receiving reward or punishment. However, this world lacks the full capacity to reward or punish many actions. For example, a person who gives his life to save the life of another; when and where will he receive the reward for his self-sacrifice? Or, a person who has killed thousands of innocent people; he can only be retaliated against once and certainly his other crimes will be left unpunished. Divine justice dictates that a person will see the result of his smallest actions, good or bad.

As this world is a place of tests and responsibilities, another world must exist, within which are the results of the actions of this world: the rewards and punishments. Each individual needs to receive what he/she merits in order for divine justice to be realised.

Case Study

Read the historical examples below:

In July, 1995, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed by units of the Army of Republica Srpska. The United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) identified the massacre as "genocide" and the worst massacre that occurred in Europe since World War II.
Source: www.icty.org

The Rwandan Genocide was a genocidal mass slaughter that took place in 1994, in the East African state of Rwanda. According to a Human Rights Watch estimate, over the course of approximately 100 days more than 500,000 people were killed. Estimates of the death toll have ranged from 500,000–1,000,000, or as much as 20% of the country's total population.

In your opinion, how could someone who has killed thousands of people be adequately punished in this world? Is it even possible? Since everyone has only one life, it cannot be said that with his execution he has been punished for his actions, i.e. the killing of thousands of innocent men, women and children. Therefore, divine justice requires that there be another world in which people are adequately punished for their deeds. It is a world which does not have the limitations of this world in the administration of justice. That is why the Holy Quran says the following about punishing oppressors and enemies of the truth:

... with hell lying ahead of him, [where] he shall be given to drink of a purulent fluid, (14:16)
gulping it down, but hardly swallowing it: death will assail him from every side, but he will not die, and there is [yet] a harsh punishment ahead of him. (14:17)

Think About

If it is so, that one's possessions or positions will not have any benefit for the human being in the eternal life of the hereafter, can it be said that wealth and positions are without value and efforts should not be made to acquire them? What is the correct use of wealth and positions? In your opinion, how can wealth and positions help in achieving perfection and eternal prosperity?

The Relationship between this World and the Hereafter

The fortune and misfortune of the Hereafter are the functions of human behavior in the world. Indeed, divine reward and punishment are the embodiments of our good and bad actions on this earth. The Qur'an states:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَلَهُمْ فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَ مَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

On that day, mankind will issue forth in various groups to be shown their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it. (99: 6-8)

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes, that on this day, neither wealth, nor children or social status in and of themselves will result in closeness to God.
On this day, all humans will be called to the court of divine justice and no position or social rank will be of benefit to humans. All persons, whether rich or poor, king or labourer, male or female, black or white, will be all alone and they will gather before God and see the rewards or punishments for their actions. On this day, only the spiritual relations that existed between humans and God in this world will remain, therefore believers who have connections of faith with their spouses, children and relatives will be with them in paradise.

This World is for the Hereafter

Some have been of the opinion that only those who have chosen to stay away from the blessings of this world and who live in poverty will reach to prosperity in the hereafter. Conversely, those who enjoy worldly blessings will be deprived of prosperity in the Hereafter. Neglecting the fact that what God has forbidden is attachment to the world and not enjoyment of God's permissible blessings. Someone who is attached to the world takes the pleasures of this world as their aim in life, but someone who pursues the afterlife takes their goal to be reaching to higher degrees of faith and perfection; this is even though they may possess many worldly blessings, as did the prophet Suleimān (as) and many of God's prophets and saints, who used them to achieve divine pleasure and prosperity in the Hereafter. Among the proper and pious uses of wealth are: helping the poor, the propagation of religion, the spreading of knowledge and the development of Muslim lands.

Links

For familiarity on how to live a prosperous life, refer to Unit 7.

Biography

Prophet Suleimān (as):
He was one of the prophets of God. He was a powerful and wealthy prophet who, in ancient times, ruled over a large part of the earth. God had bestowed upon him a great deal of power and wealth and he always sought justice and was grateful to God. The Qur'an tells us that he also knew the languages of birds and other animals and spoke with them.

Eternity in **Heaven** or **Hell**

Just as the Holy Qur'an has promised eternal heaven to faithful men and women it has also warned of eternal punishment for some unbelievers and sinners.

Certainly whoever commits misdeeds and is besieged by his iniquity —such shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever]. (2: 81)

The question arises: why should a human who has committed bad deeds for eighty or one hundred years, be punished for millions of years, or even more? Of course this question does not arise in the matter of the eternity of heaven, because the ocean of God's mercy is extensive and the rewards of heaven are a sign of this mercy.

To answer this question, we should consider several points:

1 – The punishments of the Hereafter are not like the punishments of this world. For example, someone who steals will spend some time in prison but the punishment of the Hereafter are the effects of the human's actions, as in when a person loses his sight in an accident; this incident occurred in one moment but that person will suffer from blindness for the rest of his life.

2 – It is a mistake to think that the relationship between committing sin and its punishment is based upon time. Rather this relationship is dependent upon the quality and result of the sin. For example, someone who kills: this killing took place in one moment but the law in many countries in the world, dictates that the killer should remain in prison until the end of his life. This is because what is important here is not the length of time that the killing took place in; rather it is the quality and result of the action.

3 – Eternity in hell is only for those who have no possibility for salvation. These are those whose entire existence is immersed in the darkness of sin and disbelief. They are similar to a bird that has purposely and, with full knowledge of its actions, broken its wings and, due to this, deprived itself of flight for the rest of its life.

Consideration of the points above makes it clear that eternal punishment is for a particular group of hypocrites and infidels and is the result of their own actions. Also, previously they were warned by way of divine prophets that these actions will have these results. However, due to obstinacy and rebellion they committed these bad deeds; therefore eternal punishment for some sinners is not opposed to justice.

Discussion Activity

With your partners try to find the answers to the following questions:

- Is remaining in hell forever, consistent with God's justice?
- In your opinion, which sinners deserve to stay in hell forever?
- Do the oppressive and bloody kings of history deserve to remain in hell forever?

Reference

To know more about the manifestation of divine justice in the Hereafter read the fourth lesson of, *Resurrection, Judgment and the Hereafter*, by S. M. Musavi Lari. Find the book at: www.pureislam.org

Progress Tracking

This chapter attempts to explain that the just and kind God created all humans so that, by way of performing good actions, they will remain in heaven for eternity. It is because of His mercy and kindness that He sent many prophets to different peoples, advising them to perform good deeds and to abstain from bad actions. God does not sentence anyone to eternity in hell without reason. Rather it is humans with their own actions, who have chosen eternity in hell over eternity in heaven.

Think About

We are composed of a spirit and body. Considering this reality, would it be correct to say that we perish with the death of our bodies?

Reference

Read, "Death: The First Station" of the book, *The Hereafter* by Ayatullah Dastaghaib Shirazi to learn about his definition and explanation of death.

What Is Death?

Verse 42, Chapter 39, employs the verb *yatawaffā* to describe how God brings death on human beings. The root of this verb means to take something fully, firmly, and thoroughly. That this verb is used to describe death illustrates that the soul constitutes the human being's substance in its entirety. The body functions only as the vehicle by means of which the soul carries out its actions. Another point that we may infer from the Qur'anic description of death is that death is not annihilation and destruction. It is, rather, the transition from one realm to another. It is a transition that removes the veils that obstruct one's spiritual eyes in the material world, thus enabling us to see the Supernal Kingdom of God (al-malakūt).

Key Terms

Divine unity in agency: The doctrine that the only being who enjoys absolute independent agency and self-sufficient power is God. All other agents—whether spiritual or material, animate or inanimate—lack independent power and agency. All created beings derive their power and agency from God.

Who takes the Soul?

In some verses of the Qur'an, God is identified as the One who strips the soul away from the body. In some verses, the Angel of Death is specified as the one responsible for doing this. Yet, other verses attribute this action to a plurality of angels. One may consider this to be a contradiction on the part of the Qur'an. Yet, once we grasp the doctrine of divine unity in agency, we will acknowledge that this difference in attribution is not an error. Although, God is the ultimate agent for all the actions that take place in the world, it is not incorrect to attribute these actions to their immediate agents and causes, who perform what they are inherently enabled to do, by God. As such, death is a phenomenon, like all other phenomena, that takes place in line with God's will. Yet, God entrusts the function of dispensing death to one or more angels, who act strictly on His behest.

Activity

Refer to the following verses and compare their contents:
(4:97), (6:61), (32:11), (39:42)

Progress Tracking

Based on the doctrine of divine unity in agency, to believe that there is a power on a par with God amounts to polytheism. If we believe, however, that there are agents other than God who possess true agency, being truly efficacious, but who rely on God for their power and agency, our belief conforms to orthodox Islamic doctrine. In other words, God must be regarded as the ultimate and supreme power who reigns over the hierarchy of causes and agents that make up the world. Put differently, all agency and efficacy ultimately emanates from God. If this is our belief, we have embraced the doctrine of divine unity in agency and so we are true monotheists.

Longing for or Fearing Death

One of the criteria that the Qur'an puts forth for knowing the true believers is that their feeling towards death is one of anticipation and longing. Addressing the People of the Book, the Qur'an proclaims,

قُلْ إِن كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ عِندَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّن دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُاْ الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
وَ لَن يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدَا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

Say, "If the abode of the hereafter with God is specifically yours to the exclusion of all other people, then long for death, if you are indeed sincere." Yet, they will certainly never long for death on account of that which their hands have committed. And God knows the wrongdoers. (2:94-95)

The reason that the true believers look forward to death is that their conduct is righteous; they have never harmed other people or impinged on their rights; they adhere steadfastly to the path of God; they faithfully carry out their duties as slaves of God, obeying Him persistently. As a result, their hearts yearn to be united with God. And as union with God is attained after death, they are always anticipating their death, which is actually their reunion with their Beloved. Thus, Imam Ali ibn Abi Tālib (as), says, "By God, my longing for death is more intense than that of a baby for his mother's breast" (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 5).

Some people, who do not live life in the right way and having a record lacking virtuous actions and filled with sins, have a fear of death and the Day of Reckoning. One day, a person asked Imam Hasan ibn Ali Al-Mujtabā (as): "Why do we fear death?" The Imam replied, "Surely you have ruined your place in the hereafter whilst cultivating this world; of course, you will not be happy to be transferred from a cultivated place to a ruined place."

It is possible that some people who have knowledge of the reality of the Hereafter do not have certainty in their heart. They believe that the life of this world is the only chance to live and that there is not another world ahead of them in which they will continue their life. This would be a reason for them to fear death as their hearts would consider death to be the definitive end of their lives. It is possible that others, due to love of and attachment to this materialistic world, have a fear of death; this is because their hearts have been lured by this world and death will be their separation from it. In contrast to these people, the believers are those who have placed their lives on the path of truth and guidance and have readied their place in the eternal world of the Hereafter. These people are not only unafraid of death, but rather they see death as a bridge, the crossing of which can take them to heaven. Thus, they have an enthusiasm for death and arriving to their permanent abode in heaven. It is interesting that while these people have a desire to die, they still ask God to grant them a long life. The reason for this is that these people want more time to gain spiritual rewards and to worship God; they desire to continue building their home in the Hereafter and to gain increased closeness to God.

Think About

The Noble Qur'an depicts believers as elated and happy at their death. How is it possible to be happy about one's death?

Discussion Activity

In your view, what is the best way to prepare ourselves for death? Why do most people fear death? Discuss your views with your partners.

Progress Tracking

We must be careful not to interpret the anticipation of death as a morbid disposition that may lead one to shun the world and live a solitary life in anticipation of death. The prayers and supplications that the religious authorities of Islam have prescribed for the believers often ask God to prolong the life of the believer so that he may have the opportunity to spend more time in prayer and worship and to draw himself ever nearer to God by obeying His injunctions. The believers must be concerned first and foremost with pleasing God by obeying His injunctions. That is the objective which the believer must pursue in life. As such, hastening one's death is not an objective that the believers are recommended to seek. They must do as God commands. So when we say that believers long for death, we mean that because of their righteous conduct and because they know that death is not their annihilation, rather than fearing death, they look forward to it as a pleasant transfer to a happier world.

Case Study

Imam Ali (as), in describing the manner of death of those people who have been deceived by the beauty of this world and who have not taken the right way, has stated the following:

He is not desisted by any desister from Allah,
لايَنْزَجِرُ مِنَ اللّهِ بِزاجِر،....

nor takes admonition from any preacher. He sees those who have been caught in neglect
وَلايَتَّعِظُ مِنْهُ بِواعِظ، وَ هُوَ يَرَى الْمَأْخُوذينَ عَلى الْغِرَّةِ ـ حَيْثُ

whence there is neither rescission nor reversion - Whatever they were ignoring has befallen them,
لا اِقالَةٌ لَهُمْ وَ لا رَجْعَةٌ ـ كَيْف نَزَلَ بِهِمْ ما كانُوا يَجْهَلُونَ،

separation from this world, from which they believed themselves safe from, has come to them and they have reached that in the next world
وَجاءَهُمْ مِنْ فِراقِ الدُّنْيا ما كانُوا يَأْمَنُونَ، وَقَدِمُوا مِنَ الاْخِرَةِ

which they had been promised.
عَلى ما كانُوا يُوعَدُونَ

Whatever has befallen them cannot be described. Pangs of death and grief for losing (this world) have surrounded them.
فَغَيْرُ مَوْصُوف ما نَزَلَ بِهِمْ: اِجْتَمَعَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَ حَسْرَةُ الْفَوْتِ، لَها اَطْرافُهُمْ،

Consequently, their limbs become languid and their complexion changes.
وَ تَغَيَّرَتْ لَها اَلْوانُهُمْ

Then death increases its struggle over them. In some one it stands in between him and his power of speaking
ثُمَّ ازْدادَ الْمَوْتُ فيهِمْ وُلُوجاً، فَحيلَ بَيْنَ اَحَدِهِمْ وَ بَيْنَ مَنْطِقِهِ،

although he lies among his people, looking with eyes, hearing with his ears, with full wits and intelligence.
وَ اِنَّهُ لَبَيْنَ اَهْلِهِ يَنْظُرُ بِبَصَرِهِ، وَ يَسْمَعُ بِاُذُنِهِ، عَلى صِحَّةٍ مِنْ عَقْلِهِ

He then thinks over how he wasted his life and in what (activities) he passed his time.
وَ بَقاء مِنْ لُبِّهِ، يُفَكِّرُ فيمَ اَفْنى عُمُرَهُ، وَ فيمَ اَذْهَبَ دَهْرَهُ،

He recalls the wealth he collected when he had blinded himself in seeking it, and acquired it from
وَ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَمْوالاً جَمَعَها، اَغْمَضَ فى مَطالِبِها، وَ اَخَذَها مِنْ

fair and foul sources. Now the consequences of collecting it have overtaken him. He gets ready to leave it. It would remain for those who are behind him.
مُصَرَّحاتِها وَ مُشْتَبِهاتِها. قَدْ لَزِمَتْهُ تَبِعاتُ جَمْعِها، وَ اَشْرَفَ عَلى فِراقِها، تَبْقى لِمَنْ وَراءَهُ يَنْعَمُونَ فيها،

They would enjoy it and benefit by it.
وَ يَتَمَتَّعُونَ بِها،

It would be an easy acquisition for others but a burden on his back, and the man cannot get rid of it.
فَيَكُونُ الْمَهْنَأُ لِغَيْرِهِ، وَالْعِبْءُ عَلى ظَهْرِهِ، وَالْمَرْءُ قَدْ غَلِقَتْ رُهُونُهُ بِها.

He would thereupon bite his hands with teeth out of shame for what was disclosed to him about his affairs at the time of his death.
فَهُوَ يَعَضُّ يَدَهُ نَدامَةً عَلى ما اَصْحَرَ لَهُ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ مِنْ اَمْرِهِ،

He would dislike what he coveted during the days of his life and would wish that the one who envied him on account of it and felt jealous over him for it should have amassed it instead of himself.
وَ يَزْهَدُ فيما كانَ يَرْغَبُ فيهِ اَيّامَ عُمُرِهِ، وَ يَتَمَنّى اَنَّ الَّذى كانَ يَغْبِطُهُ بِها وَ يَحْسُدُهُ عَلَيْها قَدْ حازَها دُونَهُ.

Death would continue affecting his body till his ears too would behave like his tongue (and lose functioning).
فَلَمْ يَزَلِ الْمَوْتُ يُبالِغُ فى جَسَدِهِ حَتّى خالَطَ لِسانُهُ سَمْعَهُ،

So he would lie among his people, neither speaking with his tongue nor hearing with his ears.
فَصارَ بَيْنَ اَهْلِهِ لايَنْطِقُ بِلِسانِهِ، وَ لايَسْمَعُ بِسَمْعِهِ،

He would be rotating his glance over their faces, watching the movements of their tongues, but not hearing their speaking.
يُرَدِّدُ طَرْفَهُ بِالنَّظَرِ فى وُجُوهِهِمْ، يَرى حَرَكاتِ اَلْسِنَتِهِمْ، وَ لايَسْمَعُ رَجْعَ كَلامِهِمْ.

Then death would increase its sway over him, and his sight would be taken by death as the ears had been taken and the spirit would depart from his body.
ثُمَّ ازْدادَ الْمَوْتُ الْتِياطاً بِهِ، فَقُبِضَ بَصَرُهُ كَما قُبِضَ سَمْعُهُ، وَ خَرَجَتِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ جَسَدِهِ،

He would then become a carcass among his own people.
فَصارَ جيفَةً بَيْنَ اَهْلِهِ،

They would feel loneliness from him and get away from near him. He would not join a mourner or respond to a caller.
قَدْ اَوْحَشُوا مِنْ جانِبِهِ، وَ تَباعَدُوا مِنْ قُرْبِهِ، لا يُسْعِدُ باكِياً، لايُجيبُ داعِياً.

Then they would carry him to a small place in the ground and deliver him in it to (face) his deeds.
ثُمَّ حَمَلُوهُ اِلى مَخَطٍّ فِى الأَرْضِ، فَاَسْلَمُوهُ فيهِ اِلى عَمَلِهِ،

Then they would abandon visiting him.
وَ انْقَطَعُوا عَنْ زَوْرَتِهِ

Key Terms

Al-Barzakh: Literally, it denotes a barrier or distance that sets two things apart. In religious parlance, it refers to the life that immediately follows death and precedes the Resurrection. This realm is designated as *al-Barzakh* because it separates, so to speak, the material world from the Final World (al-Ākhirah), which begins with the advent of the Resurrection.

Progress Tracking

The state of sleep is something that all human beings experience. The state of sleep is very similar to life in the Middle World, for it is a state between full consciousness and active life, on the one hand, and death, on the other. The dreams we see resemble closely the mode of life that we will lead in the Middle World, and so just as we can feel pain and pleasure in our dreams, the life of the Middle World is also fraught with pain and pleasure, depending on how we lead our lives in this world. Owing to this similarity between the state of sleep and life in the Middle World, theologians often invoke sleep to explain the nature of that life.

The Middle World (Al-Barzakh)

The first stage of the Hereafter and the final stage of this world is the time of dying. In this moment, in which a person is still alive, his eyes open to the manifestations of the Hereafter. He sees one or more angels come to him in a pleasant and relaxing state or he will see them come with ugly and terrible faces. In this moment, the opportunity to repent is over. Based on narrations, the person will see his place in paradise or hell. Pure servants of God will go through the process of dying with the utmost ease. For some, death will be like smelling a pleasant fragrance; however for many unbelievers, and even believers who have sinned, it will be a very difficult time.

The world that the soul resides in until the Day of Judgment is called the Middle World or *al-Barzakh*, which is the intermediate world between the material world and the world that will ensue following the Resurrection: the Final World (al-Ākhirah). The verses of the Qur'an clearly indicate that this is the world in which the souls of the dead reside, waiting for the onset of Resurrection. Believers lead a happy life in this world, enjoying the bounties of God, whereas the unbelievers endure continuous torment.

Depicting the regret that the unrighteous will feel following death, the Qur'an states,

"When death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord! Take me back, that I may act righteously in what I have left behind.' 'By no means! These are mere words that he says.' And ahead of them is a barrier until the day they will be resurrected." (23:99-100)

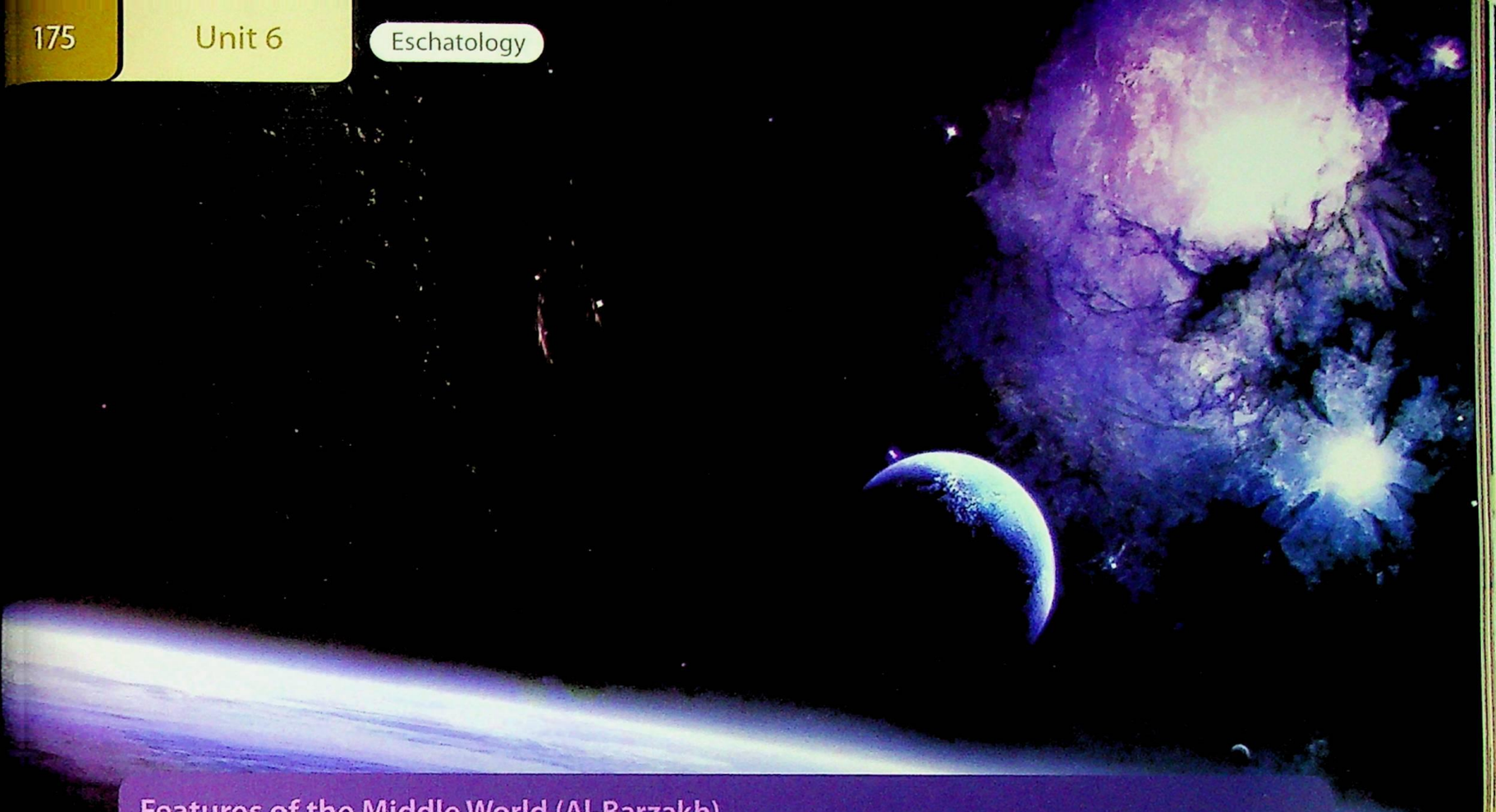
Elsewhere the Qur'an portrays the dismal state of the followers of Pharaoh in the Middle World in these words: "the Fire, to which they are exposed morning and evening. And on the day when the Hour sets in Pharaoh's clan will enter the severest punishment." (40:46)

Towards God

The existence of an intermediate realm and of separate destinations for the virtuous and the wicked is a well-founded religious belief. After death, the spirits of humans, which are the only element within them that are truly essential, are transferred to the vast expanse of the non-material world.

Just as the spirit appears in the human's body and material form after it has been fashioned to completion, the spirit retains its attachment to the body as long as the body retains the capacity for a harmonious relationship with the spirit. Once this capacity vanishes, as a result of external factors, the union of spirit and body is sundered, the spirit separates from the body and pursues its existence under a different order and set of conditions.

What we mean by this order is the intermediate realm, the first stage reached by a person after his/her migration from this world. He pauses there in the course of his journey to the meeting with God. She enters a realm with its own specific characteristics and properties, remaining there until the coming day of resurrection. A fur-



Features of the Middle World (Al-Barzakh)

In the intermediate realm, men/women encounter each other in bodily forms specific to that realm. Those who are pure and virtuous are gathered together in groups determined by their spiritual rank and degree. The unbelievers and evil ones, also find themselves in each other's company. The dealings and relations of the pious with each other are based on familiarity, intimacy, pure love, and thus anticipate the states of paradise. By contrast, the relations of the unbelievers with each other will inevitably partake of the character of hellfire: mutual enmity, disgust and envy will prevail among them.

It is evident that since all things will be determined in the intermediate realm by the particular laws and criteria that prevail there, the companionship and conversation of the blessed and the damned, as well as the enjoyment of divine bounties by the former and the experience of punishment by the latter, will also be marked by the characteristics of that realm.

Another feature of the Middle World is that a person will receive reward or punishment based on the good or bad actions they have performed. Of course, this reward and punishment will not be to the extent of that of the Final World, but will be much greater than the rewards and punishments of this world.

In the Middle World, there is no connection between its inhabitants and this world, meaning that they cannot perform good or bad actions or store provisions for the Final World; however some reward and punishment, even after their death, will reach to them. For example, if a person has performed good works in this world such as the building of a mosque or school for the sake of God, for as long as that mosque or school is used, that person will receive its reward, whether they are alive or dead; conversely, if a person has performed bad acts, such as the building of a factory for the production of harmful drugs and alcohol, for as long as it is engaged in their production and the spread of corruption in society, that person will receive punishment, whether alive or dead. Based on narrations, making supplication and asking for the forgiveness of others, as well as the performance of good acts on their behalf, will also be of benefit to them. According to narrations, among the important features of the Middle World are some of the things that will happen to the sinful, such as the torment of the first night in the grave, the pressure of the grave and the person's loneliness in this night, as well as the questioning

Case Study

God has the power to revive the dead: A Qur'anic story

We read in the story of 'Uzayr that while riding his donkey, he came across ruins in the course of a journey. In those ruins, he was confronted by the dreadful sight of the rotting bones of men who had long since died. He plunged deep into thought and asked himself, "How will God bring these back to life?"

At that very moment God took his soul, and one hundred years later brought him back to life. He asked him, "How long have you been here?" He immediately answered, "One day or less."

'Uzayr was then informed that he had been in that place for a hundred years, lying lifeless on the ground exactly where he had fallen. He was instructed to look at his donkey, and saw that its body was thoroughly decomposed: then God brought it back to life.

In the story of 'Uzayr, we also see that in order to demonstrate the limitlessness of His power, God preserved water and foodstuffs intact for a hundred years, objects that decay or vaporize more quickly than living beings on account of their exposure to natural factors such as heat, sunlight, wind and dust. He addressed 'Uzayr as follows:

"Look at your food and drink; it has not changed and it shows no sign of age. Look too at your donkey, so that its story becomes apparent to you and We may make of you a proof for people so that they no longer deny resurrection. Look at the rotten bones, and see how We bring them together and make flesh grow on them. When all this was shown clearly to him (the verse continues), he said, 'I know now for certain that God is empowered over all things"(2:259).

Activity

Before moving on to the following sections of this lesson, refer to a least four of the Quranic verses below and see what you can learn from them concerning the Resurrection:
(16:88), (18:47), (22:1), (56:4), (73:14), (75:8), (78:20), (81:6), (82:3), (99:1)

The Resurrection and the Final World (Al-Ākhirah)

The Noble Qur'an teaches that with the advent of the Final World (al-Ākhirah), the world as we know it will be destroyed, and a new order and world will take shape. Once the Final World takes shape, all human beings from the beginning of time, will be resurrected and brought back to life to live in the Final World for eternity. People will either be ushered into Heaven, where they will enjoy unimaginable pleasure, or they will be doomed to Hell, where unbearable anguish will befall them. The nature of that world is totally unknown to us. It is impossible for human knowledge to grasp in detail how that world will be. Reason can only shed light on the most general of notions about the afterlife, and so most of what we know concerning the Final World comes from religious sources—the holy scriptures and the words of God's prophets.

The Fate of the Earth

The verses of the Qur'an offer a very dramatic depiction of what will become of the earth with the onset of the Final World. What follows is a summary of how the various verses articulate the sequence of events.

The earth will be overtaken by a great quake. It will crmble and that which it contains will come to the surface. Seas will be sundered. Mountains will move and collide, turning into infinite heaps of soil, which will then be dispersed and the great mountain ranges that mark many of the regions around the world will disappear.

The Disintegration of the Stars

Just as the earth will undergo a major transformation to accommodate the Final World, so too will the stars be transformed. The sun, the moon, and the stars, many of which are millions of times greater and brighter than the size of the sun, will go dark. The order that characterizes their motion will cease to exist. Chaos will reign. The sun and the moon will collapse into one. The dome of the sky that surrounds and protects the earth will vanish. Galaxies will turn into molten matter, and smoke will fill the entire cosmos.

The First Blow of the Angelic Trumpet: Trumpet of Death

Once the earth and the stars are drawn into a vortex of chaos, the Trumpet of Death will be blown, and all living beings shall die. The spirits and souls, engulfed by fear and terror, will panic. But those whose hearts shine with the light of truth, aware of the mystery of the world and suffused with the love of God, will remain calm and happy.

Reference

"Isrāfīl will Blow in the Trumpet" is a chapter in, *The Hereafter*, by Āyatullah Dastghayb Shirazi. It provides details about the first and second blows of the angelic trumpet. You may read the book online at: www.pureislam.org

The Second Blow of the Angelic Trumpet: Trumpet of Life and Resurrection

After the death of all living beings, a new world will ensue, a world that is capable of existing for all eternity. The infinite expanse of the world will shine with the light of God. The Trumpet of life is blown, and all human beings shall at once rise from their graves. The resurrected people will move about in panic and fear, like swarms of locusts. In the onrush, they will advance toward the Court of God. All human beings, from all times, will gather in one immense expanse. The life in the Middle World will seem to them to have lasted only for a few short moments.

Pillars of Wisdom

Regarding the trumpet of Isrāfīl, the noble Prophet of Islam (s) says:
"At that time, some people will be in their own homelands, and some will be traveling. Some will be swallowed up by death as they are about to place a morsel of food in their mouths. Some will be talking to their friends and their souls will be taken from them before they are able to complete their words. In the end death will have overtaken all human beings, but Isrāfīl will continue blowing on his trumpet until all springs and rivers, all buildings, trees, mountains, and oceans, are intermingled and buried in the heart of the earth.
As the dead fall to the ground, some will be on their backs, and others will lie face down. People will still have food in their mouths: the food that death gave them no chance to swallow" (*Tafsīr al-Burhān*, Vo. 4, p. 85).

Web Links

The first passages of the supplication of Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) contain eloquent references to the inauguration of the Resurrection and the state of human beings in those very difficult moments. You may read the said supplication on the following website: www.duas.org/ramazan/munajaat_e_amir.htm

The Manifestation of God's Kingdom and the Abolishment of Worldly Relations

In the Final World, the inner reality of the world will finally be manifested to all human beings, and God will exhibit His Kingdom. Following the Resurrection, such trepidation will encompass people that they will be incapable of speaking. In silence they will ponder anxiously about their fates, incognizant of anyone else. The terror will be so great and the anxiety so overwhelming that every individual will be concerned only with his own salvation: parents will disown their children; children will shun their parents; friends will abandon each other. All relationships will be rendered futile, except for those that were for God. All relationships whose substance and purpose were evil will be cause for regret and remorse rather than comfort and help. Ungodly relationships will turn to enmity. Such will be the fate of those who refused to obey God in the world.

The Court of Divine Justice

Among the heavenly books, The Holy Quran is the only book which delineates the Day of Resurrection. In hundreds of instances it mentions the Day of Resurrection by various names and describes the fate of the world and its inhabitants, sometimes in brief and other times explicitly. The Quran repeatedly reminds us that faith in the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) is on a par with faith in God and is one of the three principles of Islam. Not having belief in it (denial of the Resurrection) would take someone out of the Islamic faith and would prevent him from entering Paradise. One of the reasons for the importance of belief in this day is that belief in the Resurrection and the remembrance of such a day in peoples' futures is its ability to prevent people from committing sins and establishes the grounds for gaining piety; conversely, lacking faith in it or forgetting about it causes some to go astray and commit sins. In relation to this the Holy Quran states:

"Indeed those who stray from the way of Allah - there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning. (38:26)

On the Resurrection Day, every individual from Adam (as) until the last human, will be in the presence of God. Some will have dark and gloomy faces and some will have luminous and happy faces. At this time, a book of the deeds of each person will be given to them; this book will detail each moment of the person's life, and in the words of the Quran, "It omits nothing, big or small, without enumerating it. They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone" (18:49). Some will be given the book of their deeds in their right hand: these are people who followed the right path in life and some will be given their book in their left hand or from behind their head; those are the people who followed the wrong path in life and did not respond to the call of their God-given nature. In regard to this group of people, the Quran states:

"But as for him who is given his book in his left hand, he will say, 'I wish I had not been given my book…'" (69:25)

In this court, the witnesses will consist of the angels, the prophets, and the friends of God. But even one's limbs and skin will attest to the actions that their possessor performed by their means. The actions of all people will be carefully evaluated in accordance with the scale of God's Justice.

Many Qur'anic verses and traditions confirm that human beings will be accounted for their deeds accurately on the Day of Resurrection. All their deeds whether small or big shall be reckoned and even the most insignificant action shall not be neglected. For example, Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِن كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ

"And we set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in aught. Though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it. And We suffice for reckoners." (21: 47)

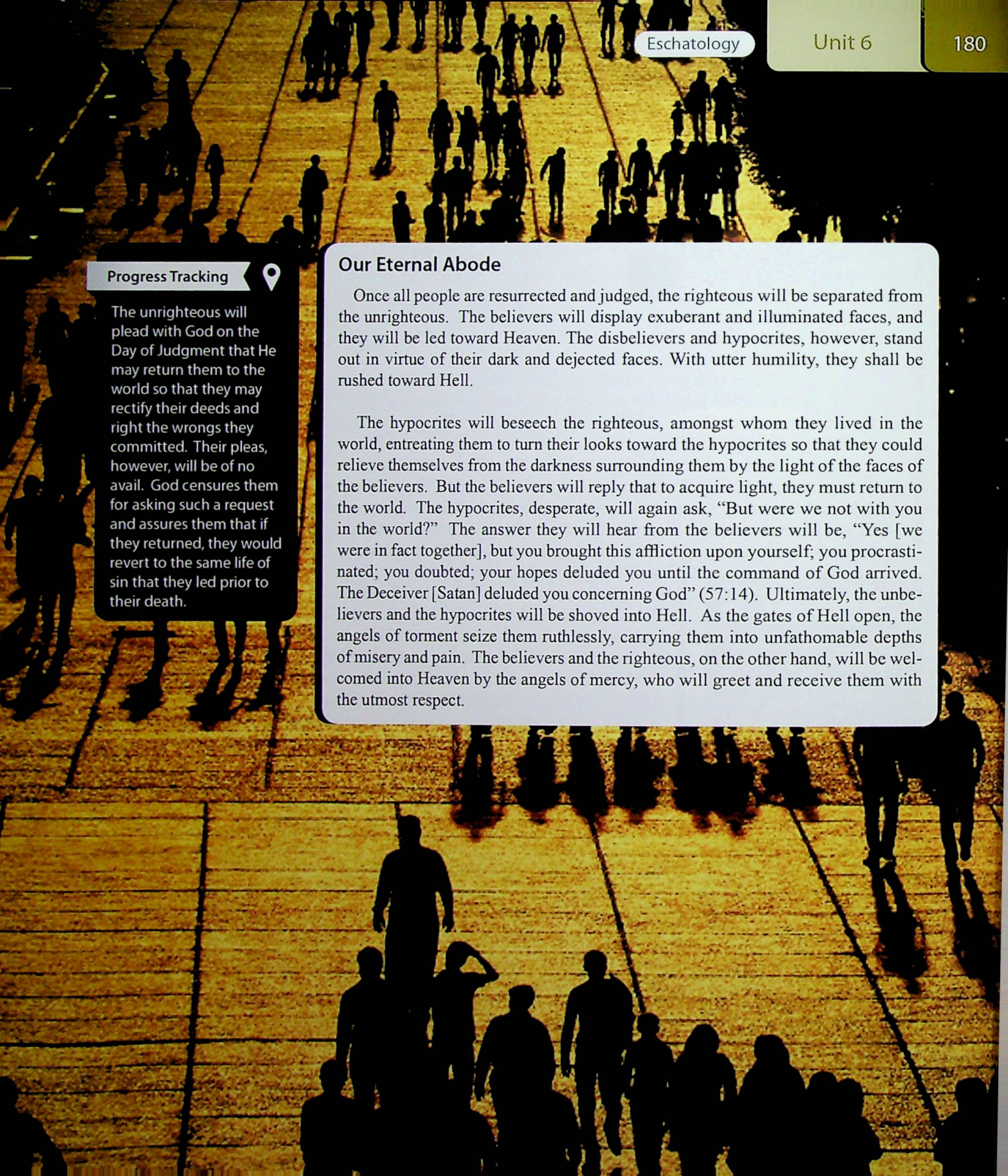
One of the greatest punishments on the Day of Resurrection will be the shame of the guilty who will see a person who has spent his life in this world in sinful opposition to God. Of course, the sins of those who committed sin in this world and then repented will be cleaned from their book of deeds as if they had not committed any sin at all; they will not therefore taste the bitterness of shame on this day. Among the other characteristics of this day will be its lengthiness, its detailed and drawn out accounting and the pressure brought upon the guilty by overwhelming thirst, which will make their tolerance of this day extremely difficult. On the other hand, a group will have their deeds calculated in a very short time and, with a heart full of God's love, will drink from the pool of Kawthar.

Reference

To read more on the criteria in accordance with which our conduct will be assessed on the Day of Judgment, you may read the section entitled "The Criteria by which Our Deeds Will Be Judged," from *Resurrection, Judgment, and the Hereafter*, by Ayatullah Musavi Lari. The text is available online at: www.pureislam.org

Activity

Refer to the following verses to see how God evaluates human conduct: Chapter 2, verse 284; Chapter 7, verses 8-9; Chapter 50, verses 21-22.



Progress Tracking

The unrighteous will plead with God on the Day of Judgment that He may return them to the world so that they may rectify their deeds and right the wrongs they committed. Their pleas, however, will be of no avail. God censures them for asking such a request and assures them that if they returned, they would revert to the same life of sin that they led prior to their death.

Our Eternal Abode

Once all people are resurrected and judged, the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous. The believers will display exuberant and illuminated faces, and they will be led toward Heaven. The disbelievers and hypocrites, however, stand out in virtue of their dark and dejected faces. With utter humility, they shall be rushed toward Hell.

The hypocrites will beseech the righteous, amongst whom they lived in the world, entreating them to turn their looks toward the hypocrites so that they could relieve themselves from the darkness surrounding them by the light of the faces of the believers. But the believers will reply that to acquire light, they must return to the world. The hypocrites, desperate, will again ask, "But were we not with you in the world?" The answer they will hear from the believers will be, "Yes [we were in fact together], but you brought this affliction upon yourself; you procrastinated; you doubted; your hopes deluded you until the command of God arrived. The Deceiver [Satan] deluded you concerning God" (57:14). Ultimately, the unbelievers and the hypocrites will be shoved into Hell. As the gates of Hell open, the angels of torment seize them ruthlessly, carrying them into unfathomable depths of misery and pain. The believers and the righteous, on the other hand, will be welcomed into Heaven by the angels of mercy, who will greet and receive them with the utmost respect.

Activity

Look up the following verses and assign them to the group of verses of intercession to which they correspond: (2:48), (2:255), (21:28), (32:4

Progress Tracking

Is intercession a form of favoritism? When intercession is carried out in human society as a form of partiality, the authority to whom the interceder appeals to on behalf of the interceded might actually be reluctant to grant the favor sought by the interceder. That is, he may be forced or otherwise coerced into accepting the appeals of the interceder due to the latter's power or wealth. The intercession that Islam puts forth is very remotely similar to the human form. Yet it bears a profound difference, which is that intercession here is purely a manifestation of Divine mercy and as such is sanctioned by God and actually ordained by Him. No one imposes his will on God. It is God, Who due to certain reasons, has endowed certain individuals with the authority to intercede on the part of others. And we should once again reiterate that those who are being interceded for, must meet certain conditions. Intercession is not granted for sectarian affiliations or ethnic orientations.

Intercession *(Al-Shafa'ah)* on the Day of Judgment

In Islamic theology, intercession refers to the right that certain individuals will be granted on account of which they will be permitted to ask for the forgiveness of one or more believers. Or it may also refer to a believer's request on behalf of another believer that the latter be absolved of the punishment that he incurred on account of his misdeeds or for his punishment to be reduced. The one making the request is the interceder and the one on behalf of whom the request is made is the interceded party. In this sense, intercession is an indubitable doctrine of Islamic faith. Prophets, Imams, scholars, martyrs, angels, and the Qur'an are the interceders of the Day of Judgment.

Numerous verses in the Qur'an pertain to the topic of intercession. These verses may be classified into the following groups:

- One set of verses refute intercession in the wrong sense (that is, the intercession endorsed by pre-Islamic polytheism, which depicted God as reluctantly acquiescing to the wishes of the angels, His "daughters," despite their being unwarranted);
- One group of verses reserve intercession exclusively for God;
- A third group of verses makes intercession contingent upon God's leave and will;
- And the final group of verses specify certain conditions that one must fulfill in order to merit the chance of receiving the grace of intercession.

What we may deduce from these verses as a whole is that, as opposed to what the polytheists of pre-Islamic Arabia believed, no one can exercise intercession independently of God's will. Yet on the Day of Judgment, God allows certain individuals to act as interceders. But these interceders are not allowed to intercede for whomever they wish: certain conditions must be met if one is to receive the bounty of intercession.

Intercession is a well-founded and wise law that manifests God's mercy. As God's mercy prevails over His wrath, the law of intercession precedes that of punishment. This Divine law is analogous to the human law whereby a certain clause of the penal code stipulates conditions that if met would entitle a criminal to remission or mitigation of his sentence. A criminal may, for instance, be initially sentenced to five years of imprisonment, but because he exhibits good behavior, his sentence is reduced in time, and he is freed prior to the completion of his term. It would be wrong to condemn such mitigation of punishment as prejudice or violation of law. Mitigation of punishment is a favor that is bestowed as the result of specific conditions, and the law that allows for such mitigation is considered as qualifying and restricting the scope of the primary law of punishment.

A General Description of Heaven

Heaven contains gardens and orchards each of which is as vast as the entire expanse of the sky and the earth. Pleasant trees of every kind are present. The buildings and mansions are elegant and pleasing. Streams of honey, milk, and wine that does not intoxicate flow throughout the gardens.

The inhabitants of Heaven can have whatever they wish, whenever they want. They wear clothes of fine and colorful silk. Wearing ornaments, they sit on comfortable and soft couches facing one another. They praise their Lord, and their speech is free of all nonsense. Neither cold nor heat, fatigue nor boredom, fear nor sadness affects them. Their hearts bear no rancor or hostility.

Beautiful maidens and handsome servants serve them heavenly wine which, instead of intoxicating, brings spiritual elation and pure pleasure. Their food is the delicious meat of heavenly birds.

Yet the supreme blessing that the inhabitants of heaven enjoy therein is Divine satisfaction. Besides the blessings already enumerated, they receive bounties that far exceed what our imaginations can picture. These blessings are such that they fill the inhabitants of heaven with the highest degree of ecstasy. This state of happiness, these indescribable blessings, and, above all else, Divine satisfaction and proximity last for an eternity.

Concerning the unique characteristics of the blessings in paradise and happiness it entails, which are incomparable to the enjoyments of this world, the Qur'an says:

"A description of the paradise promised to the God wary: streams run in it, its fruits and shade are everlasting."(13:35).

There are several verses in the Qur'an which describe the graces of paradise but only a pale and inevitably deficient portrayal of the blessings of paradise can be given for the inhabitants of this finite world and as a tradition states:

"There are in paradise blessings that not an eye has seen and not an ear has heard and do not even occur in the mind of a human" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, Vo. 8, p. 60)

Activity

Read the verses cited below and write down the descriptions of Heaven expressed by them: (3:133), (7:32), (18:31), (22:23), (35:33), (44:53),(57:21)

A General Description of Hell

Hell is the abode of those unbelievers and hypocrites in whose hearts the light of faith is entirely extinguished. They are those who have enmity with God and His prophets and friends and have chosen the wrong path. Of course, hell is not strictly for these people, but is also for a group of believers who have committed sins, have not repented and have not had their sins forgiven in the world, in al-barzakh, or on the Day of Resurrection. They will enter the burning hell for a period of time and will receive punishment for their improper actions. This punishment will continue until they become completely purified from the darkness of their sins; after which they will be given permission to enter Paradise. Hell is the most complete manifestation of God's wrath. Flames rage madly therein, creating an unbearably discordant and frightening sound that fills the hearts of the inmates of hell with utter fear and despair. The faces of the inmates are dark, withered, and dauntingly ugly. The countenances of the angels of Hell fail to produce even the slightest hint of mercy and kindness.

The inmates of Hell are without exception bound in shackles, and their entire existence is ablaze. In fact, the inmates are the fuel that set Hell aflame. The only sound resonating through Hell consists of cries of anguish, shrieks of extreme pain, and screams that reflect the utter despondency of the inmates. Boiling water is poured on their heads, whose destructive heat is so intense that it melts the insides as well. When the inmates call for a soothing and cool drink, they are instead given a putrid liquid of boiling pus. Their food is obtained from the tree of al-Zaqqūm, which grows out of fire and whose consumption only exacerbates the burning heat within them. Their dress is made of a black, viscous material that further aggravates their misery. Their neighbors and associates in Hell are demons and devils, whose acquaintance they shun and wish to flee. In relation to one another, the inmates of Hell can sense only rancor and enmity, and thus they incessantly curse one another.

No sooner do they wish to express an exonerating excuse than they are hushed into silence and ordered to retreat into their cells of fire. Then they appeal to the wardens of Hell that they may slightly mitigate their punishment, but the wardens will repel them, saying, "Did not God's prophets come to you and warn you?" In total despair, they then ask to be relieved by death. But, again, they are disappointed, as they will be told that their stay in Hell is perpetual and that even if death shall besiege them from every side, they shall not die but will rather be fitted with new flesh and skin only to be subjected to the same torment. Having lost hope of freedom, the inmates then start to scuffle: those who were deluded into corruption in this world will accost those who deceived them, trying in vain to place the blame of their deviation squarely on their betrayers. Yet the deceivers will retort that it was ultimately the ensnared who chose to be deceived. Finally, they will all turn to Satan and tell him that he was the main cause of their deviation and the consequent torment. However, he replies:

> God made a true promise to you and I also promised you, but then I betrayed you. Yet I had no control over you, save that I beckoned you, and you yielded to me. Thus censure me not but censure yourselves. [Today] I cannot avail you, nor can you avail me. (Qur'an 14:22)

Having lost all hope, they surrender to the torment, which they must endure eternally.

Activity

Study the verses specified below and write some of the features of Hell:
(5:30), (11:106), (21:100), (25:12), (67:7-8).

The Implications of Belief in the Doctrine of Resurrection

It may be said that the one who denies life after death looks on man from only one vantage point: he imagines him to be a creature wandering in the realm of matter and supposes that all of his existence is exhausted by the few passing moments his earthly body spends in this world. Such a view of things implies that the entire destiny of man consists of helpless exposure to a whole range of factors, known and unknown: he experiences in this world some pain and pleasure, maintains himself in it for a few days by enduring all kinds of oppression and injustice, and then finally departs in the embrace of death and annihilation.

Such a life would indeed be miserable, and to remain in the world under such circumstances would be painful. Whoever reaches this distressing conclusion about the destiny of man must view the nature of existence itself in the same way. For in his opinion it is not only man whose life is spent in the whirlpool of aimlessness and injustice; whatever comes into existence must also traverse the path of meaninglessness and oppression until the moment of its annihilation. All things are engaged in injustice: whether it be man in his struggle for survival, an insect that inflicts a sting, or the drops of a rainstorm that destructively beat down on a hut. To take matters still further, this would mean that this transitory world lacks all legitimacy, that it is simply an assemblage of absurdity and injustice.

This is the view of the person who has severed his link with the eternal and everlasting Being that is the source of all existence, and who thereby commits an error for which he must pay the price.

A unique and valuable advantage enjoyed by the one who accepts the principle of an afterlife as part of his belief system is that he knows his future is fundamentally dependent on his own conduct and deeds. So for the one who believes in the hereafter, his behavior is based on truthfulness, sincerity, and purity . Belief in the hereafter not only raises the qualitative the level of his deeds but even accelerates their quantitative growth. The richer the content of his belief, the greater will be the extent of his sincerity, to the degree that even the least of his acts will be suffused by the purest intention.

He will be aware that all of his acts are constantly subject to the severest scrutiny. Whatever good or evil act he performs will be entered in the ledger of his deeds and retained for accounting. The day will come when his account will be examined with the greatest of care, for there is no mystery that is hidden from the One who watches over him.

Discussion Activity

"The feeling of pointlessness and the lack of belief in the occurrence of resurrection and reckoning after this earthly existence has become a source of crushing fear for man in this age of progress in science and technology."
Discuss your views on this statement with your partners.

Summary

What follows is a summary of this unit.

• Belief in an afterlife that is enduring and in which the human being is immortal is an integral part of all divine religions and a doctrine highlighted by all prophets.

• Belief in the afterlife, in addition to the profound effects it can have on one's personal life, is influential in shaping life in the social arena and determining how people interact with one another. When one believes that there will be a time of reckoning in which one will be chastised for bad deeds and rewarded for good deeds, one will have a stronger motivation to respect the rights of others and to look out for the needy and the weaker members of society.

• There are numerous arguments that prove the existence of an afterlife. Chief among these assertions are the arguments from Divine wisdom and justice.

• One's salvation or damnation in the hereafter is a direct consequence of one's conduct in this world. In fact, the rewards and punishments meted out in the hereafter are the actual embodiment of our own deeds.

• The human being in not restricted in his existence to the body. There is also a spiritual element, the soul, which constitutes the real substance of humanity. Death is the separation of the soul from the body, and so the soul is immortal. There are numerous rational arguments that prove the immateriality of the soul. As a result of this transformation, the human being can view the spiritual truths that were hitherto hidden to him on account of the limitations of corporeal existence.

• In the Middle World (al-Barzakh), based on their righteous or sinful actions in this world, people will either experience blessings or they will suffer difficulties. While the main rewards and punishments will be dispensed on the Day of Resurrection.

• According to the Qur'an, with the advent of the Final World, the earth as we know it will be totally destroyed and superseded by a world whose order and laws are fundamentally different. Because it is so profoundly divergent, we cannot hope to obtain adequate knowledge of it prior to actually experiencing it. In the Final World, all human beings are resurrected to lead an eternal life. They will either be given a life of bounties and blessings or a life of torment and misery.

Reading Comprehension

1) What role does belief in the Hereafter play in the personal and social life of an individual?

2) What is 'the argument of wisdom'? How is this argument used to prove life after death?

3) By giving one example, explain why divine justice requires there to be heaven and hell.

4) What is death and what does it entail for the human being?

5) In your opinion, what is the meaning of the following: "This world is a field for the cultivation of the afterlife"?

6) Explain what life is like in the Middle World for its inhabitants. Can its inhabitants establish a connection with this world?

7) Mention some of the most important events which will take place on the Day of Resurrection.

8) According to the Holy Qur'an, with the advent of the Final World, what will become of the world as we know it?

Objectives

- To understand the general concept of felicity
- To recognize the factors and circumstances for personal felicity
- Explanation of proximity to God as human perfection
- To review the explanation for proximity to God as human perfection
- To learn about the features of a just and secure society
- To learn about felicity in the Hereafter

Biography

Abū Alī al-Husayn ibn Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā c. 980, Afshana near Bukhara–1037, Hamadan, Iran), commonly known as Ibn Sīnā or by his Latinized name Avicenna, was an Iranian Muslim polymath, who wrote almost 450 treatises on a wide range of subjects, of which approximately 240 have survived. In particular, 150 of his surviving treatises concentrate on philosophy and 40 of them concentrate on medicine.
His most famous works are, *The Book of Healing*, a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopaedia, and, *The Canon of Medicine*, which was a standard medical text at many medieval universities. *The Canon of Medicine* was used as a textbook in the universities of Montpellier and Leuven as late as 1650.

What is Felicity and Who is Felicitous?

Undoubtedly, the aim for the creation of the universe, and subsequently the creation of human beings, was to bring them to the highest point of perfection and the supreme levels of humanity. This quest for perfection and felicity exists within us as part of our nature and constantly calls us to reach perfection. Therefore all human beings share the natural characteristic of the quest for perfection and the desire for felicity. Wherein humans differ is their definition of felicity and the ways to achieve it. Each person, according to their perspective and worldview, searches for it in something. Various views have been presented on felicity and happiness, some of which are the following:

- Felicity is considered to be the successful use of existing facilities to attain inward and outward pleasures.
- It is defined based on a material benefit, productivity and as attaining the ultimate asset, by some schools of thought.
- Mere pleasure is the origin and goal of felicity.
- Almost all Islamic scholars, like Ibn Sina, the famous scholar and philosopher of the Islamic world, have defined felicity as the actualization of human potentialities in a uniform and harmonious manner resulting in human perfection.

To better understand the definition of the Islamic scholars, several points must be considered. First, since humans benefit from two dimensions, material and spiritual, their quest for perfection is not limited to the performance of actions that satisfy their material needs, such as eating and drinking, nor is it limited to providing for spiritual needs, such as acquiring morally desirable traits; rather, their perfection depends on excellence in, and meeting the needs of, both material and spiritual dimensions. Second, man is a single, integrated being with different dimensions and the closeness of the relationship between his material and spiritual dimensions is such that an accurate depiction of the boundaries of these dimensions and their separation from one another is not possible. This integration means that human evolution, without paying attention to and giving importance to

both dimensions simultaneously, is not possible.

The comprehensiveness and success of the Islamic program for human living is based on this complete view of the human and in all the Islamic commands and teachings, the two dimensions, material and spiritual, have been combined. If you were to take a quick glance at the Islamic laws, you would easily find this to be true. For example, one of the Islamic commands is fasting. Fasting, in addition to its spiritual benefits (such as increasing a person's capacity to fight passions, increasing their patience in the face of difficulties, understanding the situation of the hungry and thirsty, and remembering the Day of Resurrection), also has numerous health benefits as confirmed by scientific studies. Or, for example, when Islam prohibited the drinking of alcohol, in addition to preventing its spiritual harm, it prevented the physical harms that drinking alcohol causes to the human body.

It is based on this same principle (i.e. the interconnectedness of body and soul and the necessity of giving simultaneous attention to both human dimensions) that in some religious commands, restrictions have been placed on providing for the human's physical wishes. As an example, even though the human has a bodily aspect and a need of nutrition, and his physical perfection is obtained through good eating, however, achieving this physical perfection must be in a way so as not to be an obstacle to some of the human's spiritual perfections. If a person were to provide for his physical needs through eating what is owned by someone else, this act would conflict with his spiritual perfection and so from the Islamic viewpoint is unacceptable.

Worldview and Felicity

One of the important matters, which has given rise to differences of opinion in the definition and recognition of human felicity, has been a contrast in worldviews, itself being the infrastructure and basis of belief and ethical systems. Therefore, obtaining a correct worldview will play a very important role in presenting a correct definition of felicity and the means to achieve it. An example, is the difference of opinions resulting from material and spiritual perspectives on the definition of felicity and in determining instances of it.

The Islamic religion, which possesses a monotheistic worldview, has a specific definition of felicity, has identified a particular example of it as real felicity and has given many advices and commands for its obtainment. From the Islamic viewpoint, the well-proportioned growth and excellence of all man's material and spiritual potential completely depends on proximity to God. The extent to which a human moves closer to this great source of mercy and grace, will be the same extent of his contentment and success. In this religion, while considering spiritual and material needs, a great number of guidelines and commands have been given in various aspects of individual and social life; these are the means for man to achieve felicity in this world and in the afterlife.

Now that the position and importance of achieving felicity in Islam has become clear, this question may come to mind: if we want to be felicitous, what things do we need and what actions should we take? For someone who wants to head towards felicity, it is similar to a person setting out to climb to the top of a big mountain. At first, the person must have a good understanding of the following three points:

1) Who am I and what talents, abilities and needs do I have?
2) What is the point of perfection that I must reach to?
3) How and with what tools am I able to attain the peak of felicity?

Think About !

Pay close attention to the plants surrounding you. Do they all grow at the same pace? Do they reach their full potential at the same time? Are they required to be kept in the same environment and circumstances in order to grow? Have you pondered upon the growth of human beings?

Felicity

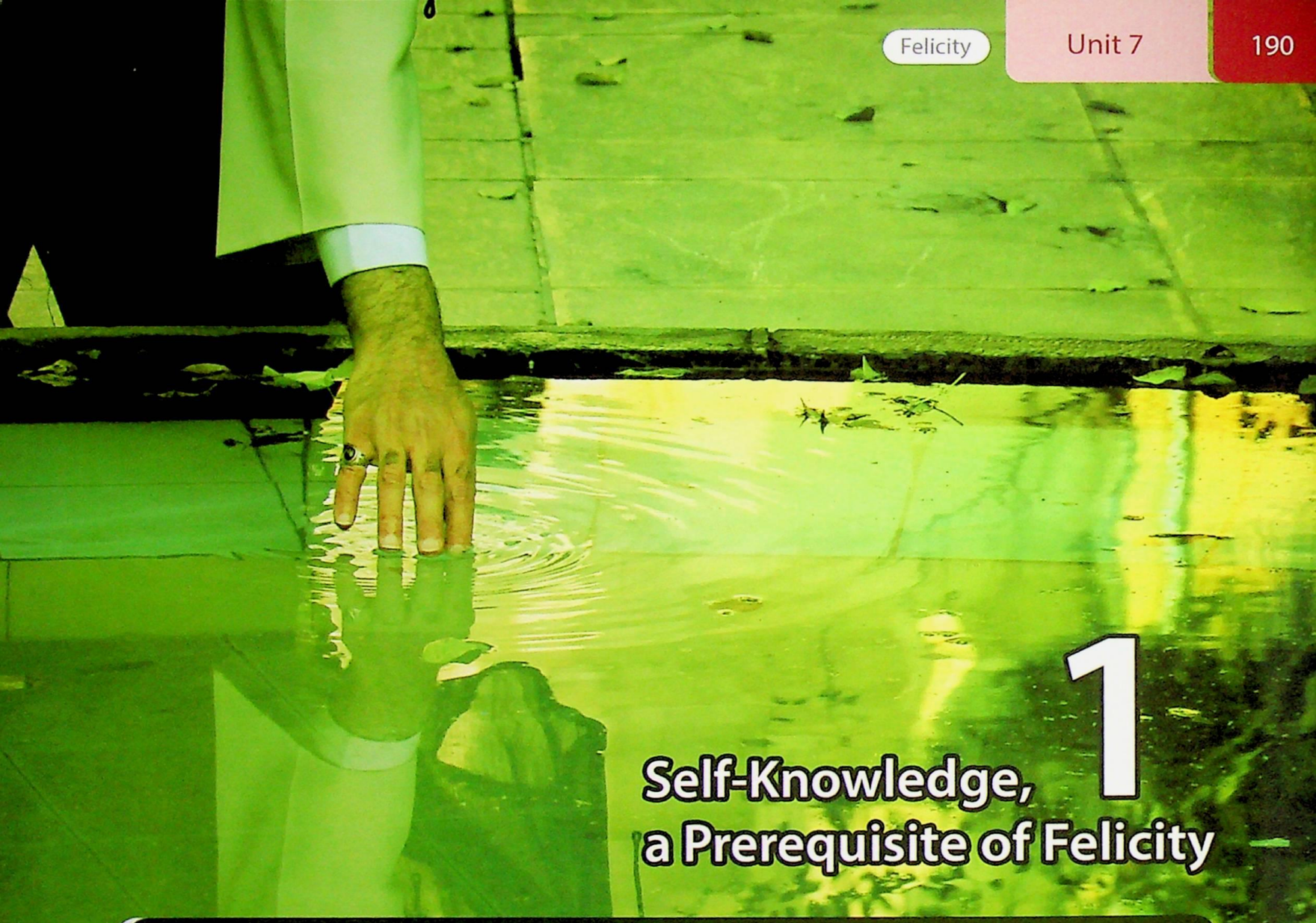
Case Study

The poem below by Edwin Arlington Robinson is a good portrayal of nihilism at the end of the materialistic road:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked,
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.
And he was rich--yes, richer than a king--
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.



1 Self-Knowledge, a Prerequisite of Felicity

As mentioned, in order to achieve felicity, people must realise their potential and strive towards perfection. What is certain is that until people know their potential, they will not be able to take effective steps towards their felicity. Since the religion of Islam calls for productivity in all human potentialities, within both material and spiritual dimensions, it constantly calls upon man to reflect on himself. When someone knows the reason God put these potentialities at his disposal, knows what the function of these potentialities is, and knows to what extent of perfection she can achieve, he will easily be capable of finding his path to felicity and move towards the peaks of perfection. That is why the first and most important step in achieving perfection is self-knowledge. However much a person advances in knowing herself and understanding her dependence on God, she will progress to that extent along her evolutionary path and gain success in reaching real felicity. That is why Imam Ali (as) stated: "Anyone who gains self-knowledge will achieve the greatest felicity and success." In fact self-knowledge is the ultimate recognition which leads to the knowledge of God. Because human nature is connected with the knowledge of God, calling to self-knowledge is in fact calling to the knowledge of God and connection with Him. Imam Ali (as) also stated: "Oh God! You created the hearts with Your love and the intellects with Your knowledge."

2

Proximity to God

The second step in reaching the pinnacle of bliss is to know the destination and path that man must follow during his life. If a climber were to lack knowledge of the characteristics of the mountain he is to climb and the path he should climb, he will certainly not reach his destination. The destination and ultimate felicity of man is actually to reach God. As a human becomes closer to God, he will become more complete and will gain more benefit and felicity. This is because the only being who has complete perfection is God and it is with having proximity to Him that can meet the human thirst for absolute perfection.

What is meant by proximity to God Almighty as the final existential destination which mankind must voluntarily move towards is not to reduce temporal and spatial distance, for God Almighty is the creator of time and space, hence, He encompasses both and bears no temporal or spatial relation with any entity. In addition, reducing temporal and spatial distance is in no manner considered as a virtue of excellence. However, a definition can be conceived that entails acquisition and conforms to the ultimate state of perfection.

Considering that God is the source of all good and perfection, however much the attributes of goodness and perfection increase within a human, she will move that same amount towards God; this is the meaning of proximity to God. Nearness to God is achieved when a human realizes she is totally in need of and dependent on God, accepts Him as the lord of the world and dedicates herself to His obedience and worship. The result of this belief in divinity, feeling of being in the presence of God and obeying Him is that the dignity of a human is increased and her good attributes and perfections increase. Accordingly, a human is similar to a mirror; the smoother and more polished it becomes, the better it is able to reflect the divine names and attributes.

Thus, man's true perfection is to achieve nearness to God and every other stage of physical and spiritual perfection along this long journey is a means and preliminary circumstance for reaching this level; they have to be assessed based on the criterion mentioned earlier, namely their significance in getting us closer and closer to that particular state.

From this discussion it can be concluded that perfection is nothing but closeness to Allah and receiving His pleasure. For He is the most perfect being and the source of all values and goodness. The following are some of the results of closeness to Him, which come after gaining His pleasure:

Progress Tracking

In verse (2:30) of the Holy Quran, God mentions the creation of Prophet Adam (as) as a viceroy being placed on the earth. Viceroyship has the meaning of substitution and so this would not be the case, unless the viceroy from every aspect and all facets is indicative of the one he is substituting. Therefore the representative of God is one who, more than others, has congruity with God and since God is the source of all good and perfection, and His actions are free of any evil, His viceroy also, in representing the good and perfection of the Almighty, is the best of creatures. It should also be noted that the above verse implies that the person in this position is superior to all the angels.

A

Links

For a reminder of the discussions related to evil and divine wisdom, refer to lesson 2 pages 41-44.

Worldly Bounties:

if a person or society obeys Allah and gains His pleasure he or she will receive more and more blessings.

وَ لَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْقُرَى ءَامَنُواْ وَ اتَّقَوْاْ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ لَكِن كَذَّبُواْ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْسِبُونَ

"If the people of the towns had been faithful and Godwary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth. But they denied; so We seized them because of what they used to earn." (7:96)

All people, whether Muslims or of other faiths, encounter various problems in life; these problems may be individual, familial, financial, etc. Depending on their quantity and quality, man attempts to overcome them. A point that must be noted is that people of faith, due to their trust in God and their mental peace, regard these problems as divine tests. They can more easily cope with these problems and their hearts are always filled with hope in the kindness of their Lord. They never surrender to the problems they encounter and they always exert efforts in hope for the reward that God has promised for the patient and those who trust in God; through their trust in God, Almighty, they succeed in this life and in the afterlife.

Pillars of Wisdom

The Prophet of Islam (s) stated: For a person who possesses these three attributes, God will give him the good of this life and the afterlife: being content with divine decrees, being patient in the face of calamities and saying prayer in hardship and ease. (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 68, p. 156)

Abdullah ibn Abī Ya'fūr, who was ill for a long time, said one day, because of the pains I was suffering from, I complained to Imam J'afar ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as). The Imam (as) said to me: If a believer knew the reward which God has intended for him because of his sufferings, every moment he would wish to be cut in pieces with scissors. (*al-Kāfī* vol. 2 p. 255)

B

Freedom from all obstacles in the process of self-improvement:

To be religious means to be devoted to Allah and divine values. At the same time it means to be free from false gods in society, bad habits or customs, social norms or laws and superstitions. In the Holy Qur'an we find that one of the objectives of the Prophet (s) is to free people.

"…those who follow the Apostle, the uninstructed prophet, whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Evangel, who bids them to do what is right and forbids them from what is wrong, makes lawful to them all the good things and forbids them from all vicious things, and relieves them of their burdens and the shackles that were upon them —those who believe in him, honour him, and help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the felicitous." (7:157)

C

Peace and confidence:

Whenever a man gets close to Allah, the Lord of All the Universe, the Great, al other things appear light and small to him. He feels that he is under His protectior so nothing can be harmful to him. He does not suffer any difficulties or pain except that they are to his own benefit and Allah will give him rewards.

In other words, human beings are innately thirsty to reach infinite good or perfection. They may make mistakes in distinguishing what is pleasing, e.g., they may consider money or fame or power as what is good, so they try to obtain more and more of each of them without any limitation, but nothing can provide the real answer to their innate need (or love). Often, those who are very rich or powerful suffer a lack of spiritual peace. Only closeness to Allah can satisfy them. When these needs are met, man finds such comfort and assurance that words cannot describe. Let us submit our hearts with Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn al- Sajjād (as) while he prays:

و غُلّتی لا یُبرِدُها الّا وصلُک و لوعتی لا یُطفیها الّا لقاؤک و شوقی إلیک لا یبلّه الّا النّظرُ إلی وجهک
و قراری لا یقرُّ دُون دُنوّی منک

"Nothing will cool my burning thirst but reaching You, quench my adour but meeting You, damp my yearing but gazing upon Your Face (wajh), settle my settling place without closeness to You." (*The Psalms of Islam*, p. 251, 252)

Case Study

There are many people in the world who have comfortable lives but who suffer a lack of peace and confidence to the extent that some of them resort to alcoholic drinks or narcotic drugs to decrease their spiritual pain or their self-consciousness. In the end, they sometimes commit suicide.

وَ مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِى فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا وَ نَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيمَةِ أَعْمَى

"But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind." (20: 124)

أَلا بِذِكْرِ اللهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوب

"Now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts at rest." (13: 28)

Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) says that the reason why the pious are not afraid of losing anything and everything becomes easy for them is that they have appreciated His greatness so nothing else is important in their view. If you are on a beach close to the ocean you do not pay any attention to a glass of water in the hand of a child. Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) says this about the pious (muttaqīn):

عَظُمَ الخالِقُ فِى انفُسِهِم فَصَغُرَ ما دُونَه فِى أَعيُنِهِم

"The greatness of the creator is seated in their hearts and so everything else appears small in their eyes." (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 191)

Those who have given their hearts to God find knowledge of God's greatness in contrast to everything and everyone other than Him appears to them as small and insignificant. It is to such an extent, that they do not see the manifest greatness of others in comparison to the inherent greatness of God, but they also do not see themselves. They are ready to sacrifice their whole existence in the way of God in order to become closer to Him. They are without fear of difficulties and death and regard them as means to gain nearness to God.

Shaykh al-Sadūq devoted a separate chapter in his book, *Ma'ānī al-Akhbār*, to the meaning of death. There he narrates ten hadiths on this subject from the Infallible Imams (as), among which he says: Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjād (as) stated: "When things became difficult in Karbalā for my father Husayn ibn Ali (as), Master of the Martyrs, some of those who were with him looked at him and saw that he was unlike them. This is because when things became more difficult, their color changed, their posture changed and fear surrounded their hearts, but the color of Husayn (as) and his special companions shone, their limbs were relaxed and their hearts were sedated.

In seeing this, some of them said to each other: "Behold, he is not afraid of death!" Imam Husayn ibn Ali (as) said to them: "Be calm and patient! Death is nothing but a bridge which will enable you to pass from difficulties and pressures toward large gardens and eternal blessings. Which one of does not want to be transferred from a prison to a palace? Though, for your enemies, death is nothing except transfer from a palace to a prison and retribution. Indeed, my father narrated from the Messenger of God (s) to me: "Surely the world is a prison for the believer and paradise for the disbeliever and death is the bridge of the believers to heaven and the bridge of the disbelievers to hell."

D

Complete Knowledge:

One of the results of getting close to Allah is to be equipped with complete awareness. This cognition cannot be acquired through learning or studying. This is the real knowledge of which Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as) says:

لَيسَ العِلمُ بالتَّعَلُّم إنّما هو نُورٌ يَقَعُ فِي قلبِ مَن يُرِيدُ الله تَبارکَ و تعالى أن يَهدِيَه

"The Knowledge cannot be acquired by learning. It is just a light which appears in the heart of he whom Allah, the Blessed and Sublime, wills to guide."

(*Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p.255, No. 17)

All people are asked to learn and acquire ordinary knowledge, but it is not enough. The real knowledge which revives our hearts and guarantees our happiness is what comes through faith and being close to Allah. In the Glorious Qur'an we recite:

اِتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ يُعَلِّمُكُمُ الله

"Be wary of Allah, and Allah will teach you." (2: 282)

Imam Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) stated: "Verily the magnitude and value of each person is in accordance with the amount of his knowledge" (*Bihār al-Anwār*, chapter 4). A person who has more knowledge of God can perform her actions with more genuineness. This in turn increases her knowledge and therefore she can perform her subsequent actions, backed by this knowledge, with even more sincerity and belief.

It is important to note that the correct way of acquiring this special knowledge, as narrated by Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as), is through the performance of obligatory acts, the non-performance of prohibited acts and the seeking of God's pleasure; in one word it can be summarized as having "piety". This means that a person who wants to attain closeness to God must, first, become aware of the teachings and commands of God, which have come in the sharī'a law, and commit themselves to act upon those commands. This is so that God bestows on him this special knowledge and helps him in the performance of his good actions. The more a person makes effort to act upon the divine commands, the more knowledge and faith will be granted to him by God.

Reference

For familiarity with the relationship between knowledge and faith, refer to the chapter "Knowledge and Faith" in the book, *Man and Universe*, by Ayatullah Mutahhari. The book can be found at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Pillars of Wisdom

There is a well-known narration from the Prophet (s). He (s) says that on the night of the mi'rāj he (s) asked Allah about the status of the believers. Here is a part of the answer:

و ما يَتَقَرَّبُ إلَيَّ عَبدٌ مِن عِبادِی بِشَیءٍ أحَبَّ إلَیَّ مِمّا افتَرَضتُ عَلَیهِ و إنَّه لَیَتَقَرَّبُ إلَیَّ بِالنّافِلَةِ حَتّی أحِبَّهُ فاذا أحبَبتُهُ کُنتُ إذاً سَمعَهُ الَّذِی یَسمَعُ بِهِ وبَصَرَهُ الَّذِی یَبصُرُ بِهِ و یَدَهُ الَّتی یَبطِشُ بِها إن دَعانی أجَبتُهُ و إن سَألَنی أعطَیتُهُ

" None of My servants will seek closeness to Me by that which is more dear to Me than things I have made wājib to him. Then with the nawāfil (the recommended), he will seek closeness, so that I would love him, I will be the ear with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, the hand with which he strikes. If he calls Me, I will answer his call, and if he makes a request, I will grant him." (*al-Kāfī*, Vol. 2, pp. 352 & 353)

فإذا أحَبّنی أحببتُهُ (و حَبَّبتُهُ الی خَلقِی) و أفتَحُ عَینَ قَلبِهِ الی جَلالِی (و عظَمتِی) و لا أُخفِی علیه (عِلمَ) خاصَّةِ خَلقِی و أناجِیهِ فی ظُلَمِ اللیلِ و نورِ النّهارِ حتّی یَنقَطِعَ حَدیثُهُ مع المخلُوقِینَ و مُجالسَتُهُ معهم و أُسمِعُهُ کلامِی و کلامَ مَلائکتِی و أعَرِّفُهُ السِّرَّ الَّذی سَتَرتُهُ عن خَلقِی

"I will love him when he loves Me and I will make him loved by My creation and I will open up his inward eyes to My glory and grandeur and I will not hide from him knowledge of the select of My creation. So in the darkness of night and in the light of day, I will tell him secrets, so that his conversations with creatures and with his companions will be cut off. I will make him hear My words and the words of My angels and I will reveal to him the secrets I have hidden from creation."(*Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 77, pp. 28 & 29)

3

The Methods of Achieving Felicity

In order for humans to reach God and acquire divine morals and attributes, they must become familiar with, and make use of the means and methods that can aid them in achieving this lofty goal. Surely God, who created humans to reach perfection and felicity, knows best how a human, and by which means and methods, is able to come close to Him. According to the words of the Holy Quran, the most effective way to achieve felicity is through the worship of God.

أَ لَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَبَنِي ءادَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُواْ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ وَ أَنِ اعْبُدُونِي هَاذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ

'Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, "Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is a straight path"? (36: 60-61)

Worship does not necessarily mean a particular act of worship. Every action, or even thought, which takes place for Allah's pleasure is considered as worship. Worship in this broad sense is able to encompass our entire lives. Our work or jobs, our speech or listening, our eating or drinking and even our sleeping can be for His pleasure and can be helpful in our spiritual development.

For this reason God sent prophets to the people, i.e. in order for them to gain awareness of His commands and recommendations and the methods of His worship. In the religion of Islam, God has provided a comprehensive program for human life, in both the individual and social dimensions; the guidelines and instructions are not limited to any one dimension of human life.

As a matter of fact, if we want to worship Him and get close to Him, it is not enough to perform some prayers or practice fasting and the like. It is a challenge for all aspects of our being. First of all, we should know Allah and His religion. Secondly, we should act according to His laws. Thirdly, we should shape our characters and spiritual qualities in forms that are pleasing to Him. Thus, there are three realms of improvement: creeds, deeds and virtues.

The Holy Quran construes what has been said in regard to the means of achieving felicity as piety and it introduces piety as the means to achieve guidance and salvation.

وَ يُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَ لا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Allah will deliver those who were Godwary with their salvation. No ill shall touch them, nor will they grieve. (39:61)

Piety is in fact a spiritual state that calls a person toward performing obligatory acts and abstaining from forbidden acts and pious persons are promised a place in eternal paradise.

Activity

Read the article "*The Significance of Self-Control and Self-Purification*" by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali and explain the opinion of the author about the following passage:
"Purification of the soul is a prerequisite for closeness to God. Indeed, the whole point of morality and spirituality is to purify one's soul."
You can find the book at: www.pureislam.org

Activity

The Arabic word for piety is, "taqwa", and its derivatives have appeared in the Holy Quran more than two hundred times. Refer to the following verses and study the speech of God in relation to piety.

(2:21), (3:15), (7:26), (16:30), (24:34),(39:28).

The Perfect and Complete Man and Reaching Felicity

Proximity to God means to actually pass the levels and stages of existence and draw close to the infinite center of this universe. Since God is absolute perfection, throughout this endeavor, the servant will be granted perfection and excellence and since He is All-Knowing the servant's knowledge and cognition will also grow. The same goes with the attribute of power. In this regard, howsoever, much one becomes close to God, the more divine attributes he receives, therefore, the more he changes, which alters his spirituality, will, power and everything else. As the Quran says, it is as though he is given a new life as a newborn infant; his life before that was as death compared to his new life. In the Islamic school of thought a man reaches the status of the complete and perfect man under three circumstances:

One will become the complete individual if "all human values" are cultivated "to the highest point" and "in the most sophisticated sense". Therefore, the perfect man is he who has actualized and nourished all human values within himself to the highest extent with the utmost coordination.

Activity

Refer to the book, *Perfect Man*, by Ayatollah Mutahhari. Read Part 1 of this book and write a summary of it. The book can be found at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Progress Tracking

If a person is excessively brave, without having the right amount of knowledge, they can cause great danger to themselves and those surrounding them. However, when we say that the complete and perfect man's attributes and qualities have been enhanced to their fullest extent it means that all of his attributes have grown altogether which prevents negligence and extremism.

Pillars of Wisdom

Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (as) narrates from the Prophet (s): Contemplation for a moment is better than supplication for a whole night.

The person listening asked: "How?"

His holiness answered, "Man learns and is taught a lesson when he passes by the ruins of what used to be houses."

(*Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, Vol. 15, p. 198)

Reference

For more information on submission before God Almighty read the book, *Anecdotes and Reflections 2*, and the section regarding submission, by Sayyid Ali Sadaqat. You will be able find this book at the link below.
www.pureislam.org

Activity

In the Holy Quran, God refers to His pure servants and His Prophet (s) as 'abd (worshipper).
List a few of these verses. Why do you think God refers to this specific group as 'abd (worshipper)? Write a 300-400 word response.

Pure Servant of God

It is at this stage where man's evolvement towards his true and innate destination commences. He voluntarily initiates an aware struggle towards God Almighty, which leads to the admission of essential need, weakness and self-abasement before Him and the association of every being to its true owner until he becomes the pure servant of God.

Therefore, we can say that the final level of perfection for humankind is to become a pure servant of God or, in other words, realize her essential indigence and that the path to redeeming it is through worshipping God and seeking His gratification and replacing her pleasure and contentment with His satisfaction.

"Except the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the Most High." (92:20)

As follows, the main course of perfection, the straight path of humanity and the right passage for drawing closer to God is servitude, the defiance of the imaginary independence of His creatures and to concede to the absolute indigence of oneself:

"I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me." (51:56)

Think About

Imagine a person in the middle of a desert and he witnesses a mirage from far away. He will struggle to reach that mirage.
How do you think he will feel when he reaches the water that he wished was real?
He will then wish that he had never seen the mirage in the first place.
Now if man is confronted with his actions as a mirage that has no substance, he will be doomed for there is no return to this world after death!

The Relationship Between Knowledge, Faith and Action

Faith can be explained as conceding to what the mind and intellect have accepted by the heart and adherence to its requirements. Therefore, faith is contingent upon knowledge, but not the equivalent to knowledge.

Now, we can understand the relationship between faith and action, because faith requires action rather than being actin itself. Despite being pleasant and beneficial in terms of worldly aspects of life, if an action does not stem from faith in God it definitely will not have an effect in acquiring God's satisfaction.

"And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full;"(24:39)

The second step in man's road to perfection is the activity that one does within his heart without using his bodily limbs, namely, the remembrance of God:

"And remember Allah much, that you may be successful"(62:10)

This remembrance is in direct correlation with a human's progress towards perfection and is so important that on occasion, even a moment of true remembrance is said to be more inspiring than years of worship.

"Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth."(3:191)

The third step consists of other internal activities that originate from the remembrance of God, such as contemplating the divine signs of power and glory and wisdom among His creations. The continuance of remembrance and contemplation develops an interest and love for the Divine.

After these internal activities, come the physical actions. The undifferentiated decision for moving towards God, which is the inseparable attribute of faith, manifest in the form of differentiated resolve and physical actions. These kinds of will, which are essentially subsidiary decisions also emphasize and strengthen the remembrance of God and faith.

"Keep up prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

As the opposite is true as well, it means that if one makes unfaithful decisions, his faith will be surely weakened. Thus, faith plays the same role in relation to actions as the root of a plant does for its vegetative activities. The same way gathering nutrients from the soil instead of poisonous and useless material strengthens the plant rather than drying it out, our worthy actions also strengthen our faith and our bad deeds and sins weaken it.

"Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah and used to mock them." (30:10)

Discussion Activity

Some people support religion without action and regard belief as sufficient for salvation.
Discuss this matter in class and see if their perspective is correct or not

Examiner's Tip

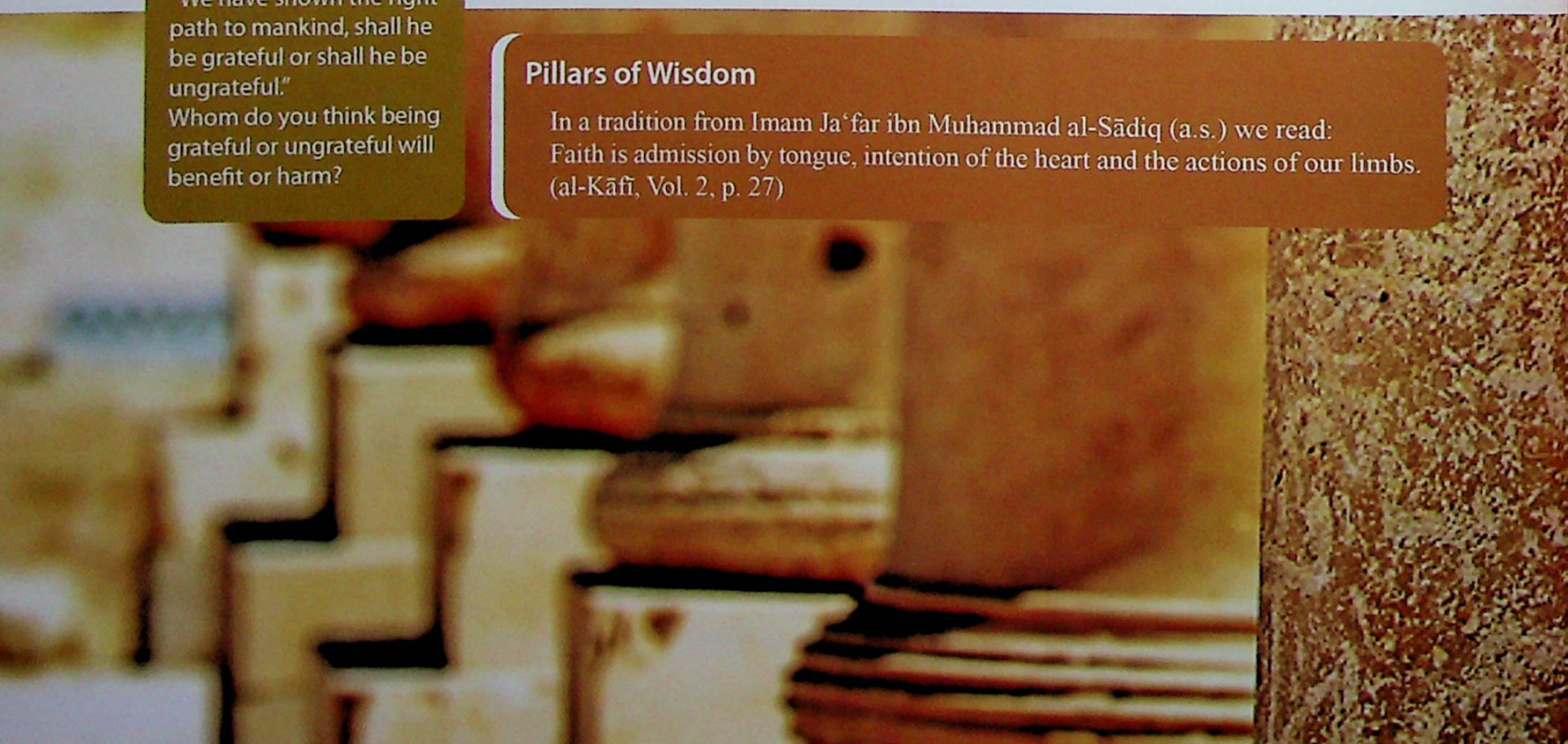
After studying this section, you must be able to answer the following questions:
What is the major criterion in the cycle of perfection?
What is the relation between faith and action? Give an example.

Think About

In (76:3), God says:
"We have shown the right path to mankind, shall he be grateful or shall he be ungrateful."
Whom do you think being grateful or ungrateful will benefit or harm?

Pillars of Wisdom

In a tradition from Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sādiq (a.s.) we read:
Faith is admission by tongue, intention of the heart and the actions of our limbs.
(al-Kāfī, Vol. 2, p. 27)



Case Study

"Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a good and pure life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did."(16:97)

IIn the 97th verse of its 16th chapter, the Qur'an promises, both men and women, that if they have faith and perform righteous actions then, in this world they will be given a new life that has been called a good life. The great commentator of the Qur'an, Allāmah Tabātabā'ī says the following regarding this verse:

The 'good life' is that which is pure and in which there is no evil that could corrupt it or which would destroy its effects. This life gives man a special type of knowledge and power that prepares him to understand things as they truly are. He divides things into two categories:

The first are those things that are true and stable while the other is those things that are false and unstable. When the believer distinguishes these two from one another then, from the bottom of his heart he shuns the false and unstable, which is nothing other than this material world and its deceptive form. He seeks recourse in the honor of God. When his honor stems from God then the Devil with his insinuations, the carnal soul with its base desires and the world with its deception cannot dishonor him.

The reason for this is that he sees the falsity of the world and its blessings with insight. Of course, we mean by not being 'enthralled with the world' that the heart will not be attached to it and that one has a monotheistic view of the universe which necessitates the understanding that everything and everyone is attached to the one God.

It does not imply that one should not make use of the world and shun it which is something that Islam is opposed to. The Qur'an has also repeatedly referred to everything in the heavens and the earth as being the blessings of God and that which Man must use and thank God for. However, that which is truly bad is the attachment of the heart to the world and relying and trusting in it rather than trusting in God.

The hearts of such people are attached to their Lord. This is the same Lord that affirms every truth with His words. They do not desire anything other than their Lord and do not love anything other than proximity to Him. They do not fear anything other than distance from Him and His anger. They understand an apparent and eternal life for themselves that no one other than their forgiving and loving God regulates

They do not see anything except beauty throughout that life and in their eyes everything that God has created is beautiful and nothing is ugly except those actions that entail disobedience to Him. Such a human being sees light, perfection, power, honor pleasure and happiness in his soul the extent of which cannot be delineated. Nor can one say how it is or how it is not. He is drowned in an eternal life that cannot terminate and an everlasting blessing that will not end. He has a pleasure that is free from pain and wariness and goodness and felicity that is not mixed with wretchedness.

This claim is a reality that the power of reason and the law also reaffirm and which many of the verses of the Qur'an also speak about. These effects of life only accrue from the true life.

The metaphorical life lacks such things. God has only allowed such effects to stem from the life that is the distinction of men of faith and good actions. This is a true and real life that God grants to those who are deserving of it.

This new and distinct life is not something that is separate from the previous one that is common to all. Although it is other than it, it is the same as it. There is only a difference in degrees not number. Therefore, the one who has such a life does not have two lives. Rather, his life has become more powerful, enlightening and effectual. This is much the same as the manner in which the Holy Spirit, that God specifically grants to the prophets (a), is not a third life. Rather, a life led in the Holy Spirit is of a higher degree.

Islam and Society

Each one of man's bodily limbs performs the task that is particular to it and also benefits from actions of the other body parts and in this way it fulfills its needs and moves in the direction of the perfection destined for it. The other limbs also have the same method of action. In your opinion, what would happen if our body parts were not to perform their responsibilities and were to refrain from fulfilling the needs of the others?

For example, when the hands and legs are busy doing some activity, if your eyes were not to cooperate with them or when your mouth chews food if only your tongue was to satisfy itself in taking pleasure in its taste and your stomach and other [digestive] organs were not to digest the food then you can imagine what would lie in store for the human being? The following poem from the famous poet Sa'dī has been placed at the entrance of the United Nations:

"The Children of Adam are the parts of one another since they have been created from one substance, if one day one part feels pain then the other parts cannot remain calm."

The responsibility of the individuals of a society in respect to that nation is the same as the responsibility of the parts of a human being's body. Meaning, a human being must see his interests to lie with the concerns of society and understand that the protection of the public life benefits each individual member of that society in the end. This is a reality that we intuitively feel with our intelligence and God-given nature. The religion of Islam also stands upon this nature and, in line with reason, has no other ruling besides this. In the Islamic society the individual members must defend the rights and strive to fulfill the needs of one another. The Holy Prophet (s), who had the responsibility of guiding and leading the Islamic community said:

مَنْ أَصْبَحَ لا يَهْتَمُّ بِأُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْلِمٍ؛

'He who wakes up in the morning and is not concerned with the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim.'

(*al-Kāfī*, v. 2, p. 163)

In reality, Islam is a communal religion and its laws relating to individuals also have a social coloring to them. It uses these laws in order to rectify and strengthen the social bonds and to execute the sacred goals of society. The goal of Islam is not only to create a religious individual, rather it also seeks to create a religious society whose collective relations are formed on the basis of the goals and rules of religion. This is a valuable nation, in which the felicity of the individual and society are connected and in which there is a strong, unbreakable connection between civil responsibilities and the Islamic faith.

By a casual glance at the verses of the Qur'an and the Islamic traditions we can find that Islam is not a religion that only keeps in mind the eternal felicity of human beings nor a religion that strives to attain their worldly felicity nor has it made ethical rules the standard for being religious; rather, Islam is a religion that is comprehensive and perfect and is not limited to any specific place or time.

It has laws for all of the dimensions of man's life such as the personal dimension and the worldly and other-worldly dimension. Since many of the things in man's life are connected to his social life a great amount of Islam's teachings are specifically concerned with the general dimension of man's life. This is to such an extent that if we compare the verses of the Qur'an relating to personal worship with those concerned with society then we find that the verses concerned with society, politics and economics to be approximately one hundred times more that the verses relating to personal worship.

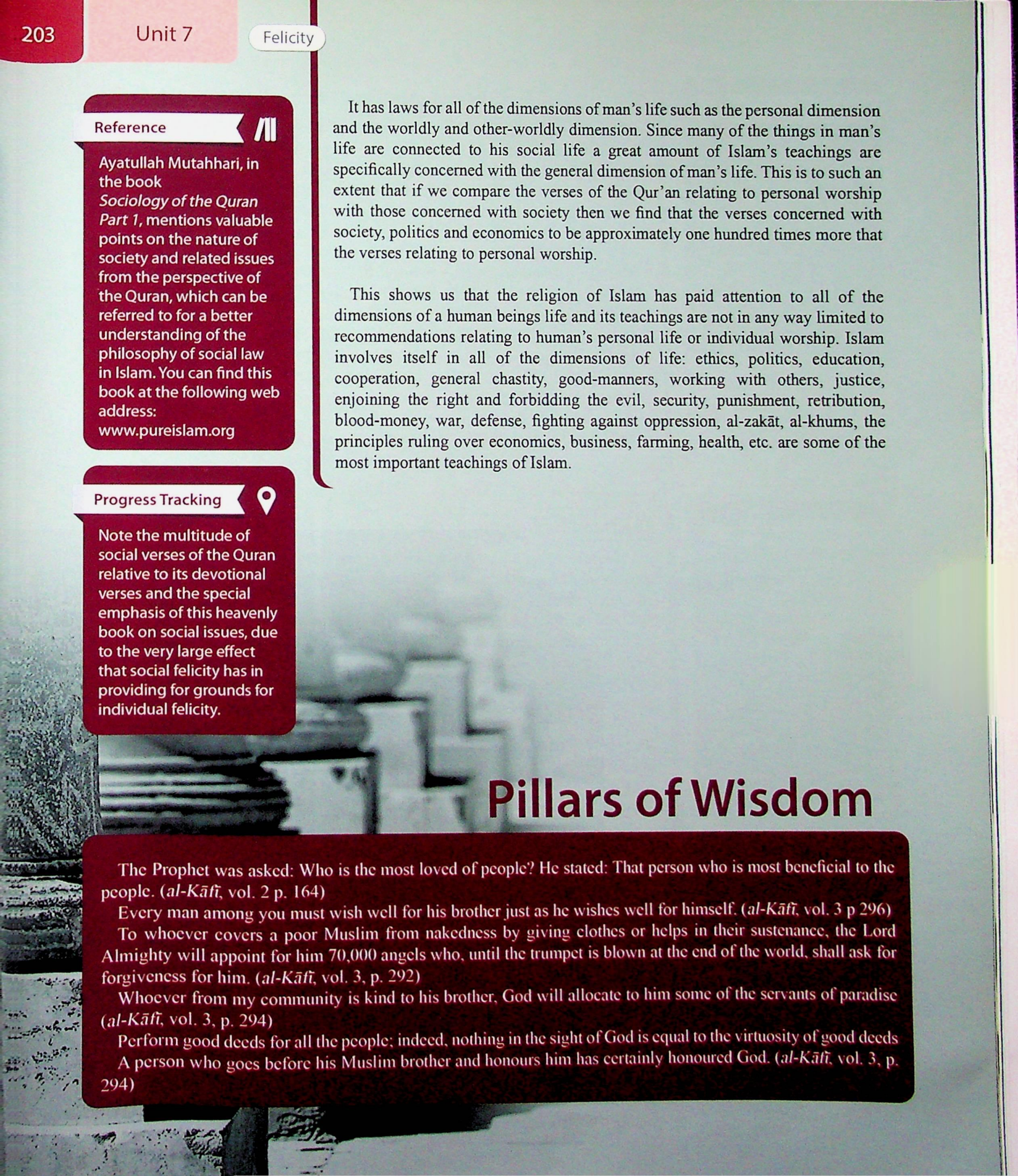
This shows us that the religion of Islam has paid attention to all of the dimensions of a human beings life and its teachings are not in any way limited to recommendations relating to human's personal life or individual worship. Islam involves itself in all of the dimensions of life: ethics, politics, education, cooperation, general chastity, good-manners, working with others, justice, enjoining the right and forbidding the evil, security, punishment, retribution, blood-money, war, defense, fighting against oppression, al-zakāt, al-khums, the principles ruling over economics, business, farming, health, etc. are some of the most important teachings of Islam.

Reference

Ayatullah Mutahhari, in the book *Sociology of the Quran Part 1*, mentions valuable points on the nature of society and related issues from the perspective of the Quran, which can be referred to for a better understanding of the philosophy of social law in Islam. You can find this book at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Progress Tracking

Note the multitude of social verses of the Quran relative to its devotional verses and the special emphasis of this heavenly book on social issues, due to the very large effect that social felicity has in providing for grounds for individual felicity.



Pillars of Wisdom

The Prophet was asked: Who is the most loved of people? He stated: That person who is most beneficial to the people. (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 2 p. 164)

Every man among you must wish well for his brother just as he wishes well for himself. (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 3 p 296)

To whoever covers a poor Muslim from nakedness by giving clothes or helps in their sustenance, the Lord Almighty will appoint for him 70,000 angels who, until the trumpet is blown at the end of the world, shall ask for forgiveness for him. (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 292)

Whoever from my community is kind to his brother, God will allocate to him some of the servants of paradise (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 294)

Perform good deeds for all the people; indeed, nothing in the sight of God is equal to the virtuosity of good deeds

A person who goes before his Muslim brother and honours him has certainly honoured God. (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 294)

Reference

If you would like to know more about the role of divine unity in the system of thought and practice of Islam, read the book, *At-Tawhid or Monotheism*, by Ayatullah Mesbah Yazdi. The mentioned book can be found at the following address: www.pureislam.org

The Unity of God, the Axis of all the Teachings of Islam

All of the Islamic teachings revolve around the principle of the unity of God. This means that the spirit that rules over all of the teachings and rules in the Islamic religion rest upon the belief in the oneness of God and the negation of independence of every creature from in this universe from God. According to this view the rights of all of beings are defined in the light of this divine unity and God, as the Creator of all beings has the sole right to be worshipped.

God has asked human beings to obey Him so that they may achieve felicity and attain perfection. For example, God has introduced rights for all beings and has asked man to respect the rights of His creatures and not to overstep these bounds. Some of these rights are related to the individual herself. For example, the body that God has given woman has rights that must be observed. Other rights are related to the different species like animals, our environment and others to inanimate beings. This view of one's self, one's Creator and the creatures of God is that same monotheistic perspective of the realm of being that stems from the truth and is the basis of all of the commands and teachings of Islam.

Discussion Activity

Considering the material at the beginning of this lesson in relation to the various dimensions of human existence and the discussions in lesson four about the domain of reason. What do you think about the need for religion in society? Share your thoughts with your classmates.

The Need for Religion in Society

As we have explained in the beginning of this lesson, man's knowledge of the dimensions of his existence is limited and it is only natural that he cannot delineate all of their needs. In addition, he cannot understand what it is that can completely fulfill all of these needs. Since the fulfillment of most man's wants is tied up with his social life, his vast and complicated relations with others and the environment around him, a certain ambiguity is added to the uncertainty previously mentioned and the need for revelation and religion is more obvious. For example, human beings may place certain limitations on one another without referring to revelation, that are to the detriment of the growth and perfection of people and the society. It is also possible that they may introduce certain freedoms that may remove freedoms from some other classes of society and may oppress them, thereby trampling their rights.

There are many examples of these extremes in history and the societies of today. It is important to remember that the laws that various societies form differ from one society to the other. These disparities do not simply lie within the specific laws; rather, there are differences of opinion within the universal laws ruling over these as well. Even the human laws that are formed within one society change within the course of time and new definitions and rights are introduced in laws. Human beings are no different in their natures and none of them are better than the other in this respect. Throughout history none of them ever changed that the universals ruling over laws that are formed could change. A glaring example of this change, which human beings have witnessed in this era, are the rules relating to race-inequality and slavery. Black people witnessed the insults and oppression against humanity for many years because of the formation of man-made laws that were rooted in pride and the base desires of the law-makers. This is while in Islam all human beings equally share the same human rights as others and there is no superiority for one human being over the other except due to piety.

Activity

Is it necessary for man to follow a religion? What is the role of religion in social life? What kinds of regulations are required in social life? What is/are the advantage/s of divine religion over other laws? The first chapter of the book, *Islamic Teachings in Brief*, written by Allamah Tabataba'i, is concerned with these questions. Refer to the book while seeking answers to these questions and then write down your answers in a 300-400 word essay. The book is available at: www.pureislam.org

The Distinction of Religion and Religious Laws

Based upon the aforementioned depiction of the need for humanity to have social laws, which are a type of chain that has been bound to the individuals of society who always strive to free themselves from them. This is one of the greatest dangers that the social laws face and it is for this very reason that some of the civil laws are formed with the intent of delineating the punishments of those who disobey the law and the reward those who obey them.

One of the most important differences between man-made laws and divine ones, is that man-made laws usually focus on the material dimension of the individuals of a society and their intent is to secure and protect the harmony of the actions of people, in order to avoid conflict that may accrue from the conflict between the freedoms of people. While religion, when forming laws for the punishment of those who are disobedient and rewarding those who are obedient, has two more powerful tools in its hands. By way of these two devices it can subdue every other opposing power. First, it draws the attention of individuals to the after-life and says that the material world is simply a passage to the hereafter.

In this way it guides people to the important idea that the only way to secure eternal felicity is to follow the religious laws that the prophets (as) taught. After understanding this fact the religious person knows that the divine laws have come from the God who knows all and is not negligent of His creatures even for a moment and that a day will come in which his actions will be judged.

With this belief the true believer cannot try to gain personal benefit by hiding his actions and disobeying the laws of religion. Secondly, every religious person understands the obedience to the religious commands to be obedience to his Lord and is of the conviction that he will be rewarded by Him for his compliance to the decrees of religion. It is for this reason that he makes a transaction with God by following the religious laws and his reward is secure with Him.

In reality, by following the religious rulings and foregoing some personal freedoms and desires, the devout person, aside from protecting the social order and interests, gains many other-worldly profits. The one who is not bound to religion does not have the same incentive to respect the laws and observe them. Keeping in mind this matter, it is possible to explain the distinction of religion in the following manner: Aside from forming legislatios that are beneficial in the worldly and other-worldly felicity of the human being, religion has placed the reigns of watching over humans in the hands of an internal watchman. This is a watchman that is never negligent of his job and does not make mistakes in it. There is no way to run away from the punishment and reward of this watchman: 'He is with you wherever you may be' (57:4) and 'And Allah encompasses what you do.' (11:92)

In this way, practicing individuals always strive to observe the laws of their religion and consider God to be watching over their actions in all situations. Also, they strive to have good thoughts about the other members of their kind. It is for this reason that they live peacefully alongside one another and will achieve eternal felicity. However, in a society in which people understand that the law that rules over their relations is a man-made one its members disobey the law when the police are negligent or misuse the influence they have in that society.

The distinctions of being religious over being irreligious, which have been delineated, depend on the intention of the believers and disbelievers in following social laws. Otherwise, if we wanted to recount the greatest distinction of the social and personal laws of Islam over the man-made laws then we must understand it to lie in the truth of these laws. These regulations and teachings are in harmony with human needs because since these commands and instructions have been sent by God, Who created man and all creatures and knows best their nature, needs and the manner in which to fulfill them.

Progress Tracking

It may be pointed out that some non-religious societies possess good ethics and a desirable and safe social environment. This is opposed to some religious societies that have an undesirable social environment. Some Islamic societies have not achieved felicity and comfort mainly due to being disordered and having incorrect Islamic training. In fact, what individual and social felicity are dependent upon is the application of religious commandments. The mere naming of a society as religious will not have much benefit to its people, because what is of value is its reality and not its claims. A person who calls himself a Muslim but does not act in accordance with its teachings and instead adopts inner darkness, vile ethics and ugly conduct waits for the angel of felicity, is like a sick person who has put his doctor's prescription aside and has hope of recovery. It is clear that with these thoughts and imagination he cannot expect reach to his destination. Of course we can find these types of problems in all countries, but what is important for us is to identify the probable causes of such cases in Islamic societies. Among these causes we can point to the neglect of religious teachings, misunderstanding of religious commandments, exegesis based on personal opinion, lack of referral to Islamic scholars for the correct understanding of Islamic teachings and also some deprivations imposed by secular societies.

Worldly and Heavenly Felicity

If we examine the Islamic sources of the Quran and traditions, the conclusion can be reached that the two issues of turning towards this world and turning away from it, in themselves, are not relevant to the commands and teachings of Islam and what has been prohibited in general is "attachment to the world and forgetfulness of God due to being highly occupied with the world." God in verse 11:61 of the Quran states:

هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَ اسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا

"He brought you forth from the earth and made it your habitation"

Imam Ali (as) in explaining this verse, said: Know that God ordered mankind to cultivate the earth in order to feed himself with cereals, beans, fruit and vegetables and live in comfort.

According to the Holy Quran and much advice from the Prophet (s) and his household (as) that has reached us regarding how to live a pious life and to be disciplined in work, it can be understood that Islam desires a prosperous and peaceful world for humanity, a world in which there is utmost the security and wellbeing. It also wants education, work, effort and careful planning to be at the forefront of every Muslim's life, but that which is more important than all of these is the remembrance of God and having piety. Based on Islamic narrations, a Muslim should be very diligent and disciplined and attach importance to the material life of himself, his family and his fellow humans. As Imam Ali (as) stated:

اعْمَلْ لِدُنْيَاكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَعِيشُ أَبَداً وَ اعْمَلْ لِآخِرَتِكَ كَأَنَّكَ تَمُوتُ غَداً

"Live in this world as if you are to live eternally, and work for your hereafter as if you will die tomorrow." (Mustadrak *Al-Wasā'il*, vol. 1, p. 146)"

Human beings should live in this world so that if they were to remain on this planet until the Day of Resurrection they would be able to continue their lives. Certainly if one was oblivious to the world and their prosperity they would not be able to survive for more than a brief time. The Holy Quran has also introduced the good of the world and Hereafter as a blessing of God which men seek from their Creator.

« وَ مِنْهُم مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا اتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَ فِي الاخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَ قِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

And among them there are those who say, 'Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire.' (2:201)

A very important point that should be noted is that this world is a transitory home and the afterlife an everlasting home for humans. Enjoyment of earthly blessings or deprivation from some of them are both means by which God tests humans, such that from the wealthy it is asked that they always and in all situations remember that what they have in reality belongs

to God and that these blessings that they have are a loan to be spent for their own, their family's, and for the welfare of other people; they are requested to pay on an annual basis a specific part of their wealth as al-zakāt and al-khums (which are obligatory to pay) or give charity or provide charitable loans (a recommended act) to the poor and needy. Observation of this divine will eradicate poverty and the giving of money to the poor by wealthy people will reduce their attachment to this world and will enable them to increase their spiritual perfection and gain closeness to God, having passed the divine tests. On the other hand, God wants the poor to be patient and to keep remembering Him and to remain hopeful of His grace and kindness. As far as possible they should not reach out to others for help and should work and exert efforts in order to provide for their and others' needs. The Prophet of Islam (s) stated:

الكادُّ عَلى عِيالِهِ مِن حَلالٍ كالمُجاهِدِ فى سَبيلِ اللّه

Whoever maintains their family with lawful sustenance is like a holy warrior in the way of Allah (*Man lā Yahḍuruhu al-Faqīh*: 3/168/3631)

In short, a person should not pursue this world for itself; rather he should pursue it for his afterlife. If a person pursues it for itself, he will not experience comfort and neither will he suffice with what he has or gain peace. This is because a person who is greedy for the world, even if he is given the whole world, will not achieve peace, as peace is achieved when a person obtains what he desires and so if he has not limited his egoistic desires then nothing will provide him with peace.

Imam Ali (as) stated:

إنَّ الدُّنيا مَشغَلَةٌ عَن غَيرِها و لَم يُصِب صاحِبُها مِنها شَيئا إلاّ فتَحَت لَهُ حِرصا عَلَيها و لَهَجا بِها و لَن يَستَغنىَ صاحِبُها بِما نالَ فيها عَمّا لَم يَبلُغهُ مِنها؛

This world turns away from the next one. He who is devoted to it achieves nothing from it except that it increases his greed and coveting for it. He who is devoted to it is not satisfied with what he gets from it because of what he has not got. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, letter 49)

Therefore, under Islamic teachings man is obliged to work and strive to provide for his own and others' needs and is required to exert the utmost efforts in contributing to the growth of science, technology, prosperity and welfare. However, he should always and in every situation remember God and follow the path that God has delineated for acquiring sustenance and providing for needs. He should be aware that everything belongs to God and it is He who created all these blessings and it is He who provides sustenance to His servants. That which God asks of humans is that they make use of this world in a legitimate way and that they give help to others. They should only rely on God and should not have hope in anyone or anything other than Him. If the people of a society practiced this way of living, the doors of sustenance would open to them and all would be able to live in comfort and prosperity. In the light of the steps they take for God in developing and advancing their society, they will achieve felicity in this world and the hereafter.

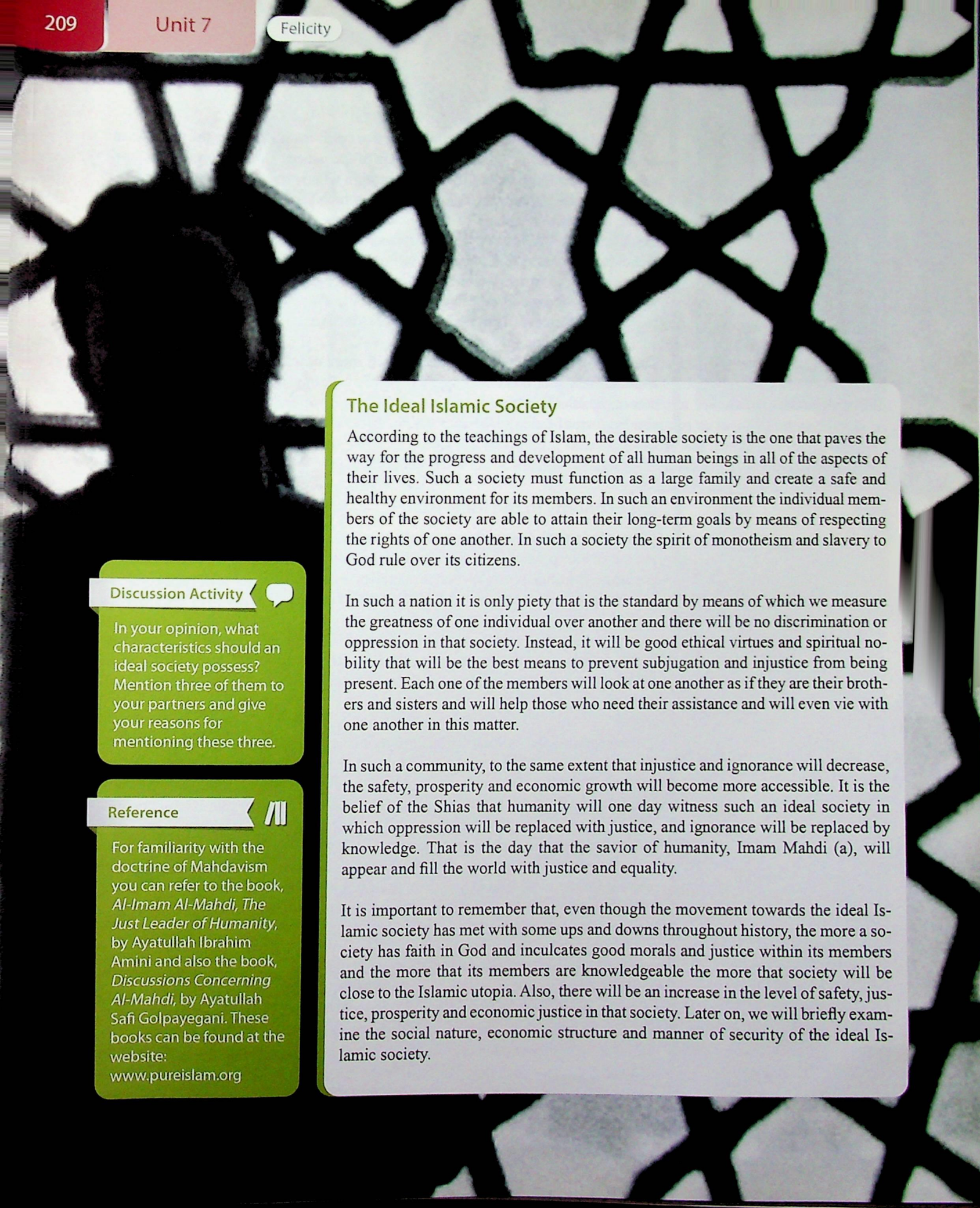
Pillars of Wisdom

قال الامام على عليه السلام: اَلزُّهدُ فِى الدُّنيا الراحَةُ العُظمى؛

Imam Ali (as) stated: Asceticism in this world is the greatest cause for comfort. (*Ghurar al-hikam wa-durar al-kalim*, p. 71, h. 1363)

قال الصادق عليه السلام: حُرِمَ الْحَريصُ خَصْلَتَيْنِ و لَزِمَتْهُ خَصْلَتانِ: حُرِمَ القَناعَةَ فافْتَقَدَ الرّاحَةَ و حُرِمَ الرِّضا فافْتَقَدَ الْيَقينَ؛

Imam Al-Sādiq (as) stated: A greedy person lacks two characteristics and possesses two: he lacks contentment and as a result loses comfort; he lacks satisfaction and therefore gives up certainty. (*Al-Khisāl*, p. 69, h. 104)



The Ideal Islamic Society

According to the teachings of Islam, the desirable society is the one that paves the way for the progress and development of all human beings in all of the aspects of their lives. Such a society must function as a large family and create a safe and healthy environment for its members. In such an environment the individual members of the society are able to attain their long-term goals by means of respecting the rights of one another. In such a society the spirit of monotheism and slavery to God rule over its citizens.

In such a nation it is only piety that is the standard by means of which we measure the greatness of one individual over another and there will be no discrimination or oppression in that society. Instead, it will be good ethical virtues and spiritual nobility that will be the best means to prevent subjugation and injustice from being present. Each one of the members will look at one another as if they are their brothers and sisters and will help those who need their assistance and will even vie with one another in this matter.

In such a community, to the same extent that injustice and ignorance will decrease, the safety, prosperity and economic growth will become more accessible. It is the belief of the Shias that humanity will one day witness such an ideal society in which oppression will be replaced with justice, and ignorance will be replaced by knowledge. That is the day that the savior of humanity, Imam Mahdi (a), will appear and fill the world with justice and equality.

It is important to remember that, even though the movement towards the ideal Islamic society has met with some ups and downs throughout history, the more a society has faith in God and inculcates good morals and justice within its members and the more that its members are knowledgeable the more that society will be close to the Islamic utopia. Also, there will be an increase in the level of safety, justice, prosperity and economic justice in that society. Later on, we will briefly examine the social nature, economic structure and manner of security of the ideal Islamic society.

Discussion Activity

In your opinion, what characteristics should an ideal society possess? Mention three of them to your partners and give your reasons for mentioning these three.

Reference

For familiarity with the doctrine of Mahdavism you can refer to the book, *Al-Imam Al-Mahdi, The Just Leader of Humanity*, by Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini and also the book, *Discussions Concerning Al-Mahdi*, by Ayatullah Safi Golpayegani. These books can be found at the website: www.pureislam.org

Reference

For more information about the philosophy of hajj, read the article, *Hajj, Manifestation of Unity*, by Sheikh Shuja Ali Mirza and for familiarity with Islamic rituals, refer to the article, *A General Outlook at Islamic Rituals*, by Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. They can be found at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Social Identity in the Ideal Islamic Society

The social identity is, in reality, the collective spirit that rules over the society and which is rooted in the thoughts and beliefs of the general population. The Islamic society has introduced all of its members, from whatever background or race that they stem from, as being the Islamic 'nation' which has one nature and person. All of the individual members of this society, from women to men, from white to black, are all brothers and sisters of one another. Islam has thought of numerous techniques to protect this social spirit of oneness amongst which one can mention the social acts of worship such as the congregational prayers, giving the *iftār* meal to one's neighbors and other needy people all of which are ways to help one's brothers and sisters in faith perform their respective religious responsibilities.

The Hajj, which is one of the greatest and most beautiful manifestations of the social existence of Islam and the rule of the spirit of monotheism over the members of the Islamic nation, displays the unity and brotherhood of all Muslims and also the magnificence and oneness of the Islamic nation in an exquisite manner.

The Economy in the Ideal Islamic Society

The religion of Islam wishes to create favorable conditions for economic growth and the safekeeping of the different needs of human beings. According to Islamic teachings, if justice is established in societies then people will become self-reliant and this is the very economy that is desired by Islam.

It is for this very reason that God has formulated specific laws for the progress of the economy and the eradication of poverty and injustice from societies. These are laws that are rooted in the equal rights of human beings and their integral nobility.

Enumerating the various distinctions that Islam has laid down for the establishment of justice and the progression of the economy falls outside the scope of the present discussion. However, we will point out a few of the guidelines and laws that Islam has formulated with the aim of establishing a desirable Islamic economy:

Combating usury and bribery: these are some of the causes of economic destruction, the increase in poverty and the creation of social classes within a society have been strongly condemned by Islam. Those who practice usury and bribery have been promised the fire of Hell and heavy worldly punishments have been prescribed for those who practice such evils.

The Obligation of Giving *Al-Zakāt* and *Al-Khums*: This is one of the strategies that Islam has formulated for the eradication of poverty and for decreasing the gap between the wealthy and the poor of a society. Giving al-zakāt and al-khums is so important in Islam that even the correctness of the prayers depends upon the fact that the clothes which one prays in have not been bought by the money which al-khums has not been paid on. In most of the verses which command people to pay al-zakāt the Qur'an also mentions the performance of the prayer. This shows

us not only the importance of al-zakāt but also the close connection it has with prayer. For example, in the verse 2:110 God says the following regarding al-zakāt:

وَ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلاةَ وَ آتُوا الزَّكاةَ وَ ما تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِما تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And establish the prayer and pay al-zakāt and the good that you send ahead for yourselves you will find with Allah and indeed Allah sees what you do.

And in 8:41 it says:

وَ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّما غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَأَنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَ لِلرَّسُولِ وَ لِذِي الْقُرْبى وَ الْيَتامى وَ الْمَساكِينِ وَ ابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَ ما أَنْزَلْنا عَلى عَبْدِنا

Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Apostle, for the relatives and the orphans, for the needy and the traveller, if you have faith in Allah and what We sent down to Our servant…(8:41)

The religion of Islam, in order to establish its ideal economy, has not sufficed itself with mentioning what must be done and must be shunned, rather, it has also stated many ethical laws and recommended rules to man. Commands such as wishing good for others, giving alms to the needy and many other things that play a decisive role in the health and growth of the economy have been prescribed by Islam.

Reference

For acquaintance with the effect of ethical commands on the Islamic economy, refer to the chapter "Ethical concepts in the service of economic cause" from the book *"Islamic Economy: Its Ideological and Legal Foundations"*, written by Ayatullah Mohammad Ali Taskhiri. The book can be found at the following web address: www.pureislam.org

Key Terms

Al-zakāt: the word literally means purity and goodness. In the language of the Quran and narrations, al-zakāt, which is sometimes also referred to as charity, is that which a sane and mature person must give to the poor and needy, the indebted who cannot pay their debts, or use to buy and free slaves. This tax is payable on items of wealth such as wheat, barley, dates, raisons, cows, sheep and some other items over and above a certain threshold which has been specified in Islamic law. A point to be noted is that according to the verses of the Holy Quran, al-zakāt was not specific to the religion of Islam and existed within many of the previous divine religions. After mentioning the names of a number of prophets, the Quran states:

وَ أَوْحَيْنا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْراتِ وَ إِقامَ الصَّلوةِ وَ إِيتاءَ الزَّكوةِ

…And We revealed to them the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers and the giving of al-zakāt (21:73)

Also, the Quran quotes the words of Jesus, who, when his prophethood was announced, stated:

وَ أَوْصانِي بِالصَّلوةِ وَ الزَّكوةِ ما دُمْتُ حَيًّا

… And He has enjoined me to [maintain] the prayer and to [pay] al-zakāt as long as I live. (19:31)

Al-khums: al-khums literally means one-fifth and in Islamic use refers to the fact that it is obligatory for every sane and mature Muslim, under the special conditions detailed in Islamic law, to give one-fifth of seven things (there are differences about these seven things in Sunni and Shia Islam). In general,al- khums is divided into two parts: one part belongs to God, the Prophet and the Imam, which is spent in matters of governance, and the other part belongs to the needy and helpless descendants of the Prophet. Needy descendants of the Prophet are not allowed to make use of the zakat related to the general Muslim population and only have permission to make use of al-khums.

Pillars of Wisdom

Imam Ja'far ibn muhammad al-Sādiq (as) stated: Verily al-zakāt is made to test the wealthy and to secure the livelihood of the poor. If people should give al-zakāt of their wealth then no Muslim would remain poor and they would become empowered from the right that God has made to their benefit. The needy would not remain hungry or naked except because of the sin of the wealthy. It is only fitting that God remove His blessings from the person who does not pay al- zakāt. I swear to the God who has created the creatures and has spread out the day! No wealth is destroyed in the land or the sea except because of the rejection of al-zakāt...and verily the most beloved of people near God is the one who is more giving and generous and who gives al-zakāt from his wealth and who is not stingy with regards to the obligation that God has made with respect to his wealth for the benefit of the needy. (*Man lā Yahḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, v 2, p. 7)

IImam Ja'far al-Sādīq (as) said: God made al-zakāt obligatory in the same manner that he made the prayer obligatory. It is for this reason that it is not for someone to pay his al-zakāt openly to the poor. The reason for this is that God has placed in the wealth of the wealthy that which will suffice the needs of the poor and if that did not suffice the needs of the obligatory [on the wealthy]. Therefore, the poor condition of the destitute lies in the evil actions of the wealthy, who prevent them from obtaining their rights and not from something that God has destined for them. (*Man lā Yahḍuruhu al-Faqīh*, v 2, p. 3)

Imam Ali (a): Verily God has placed that which can satisfy the needs of the poor in the riches of the wealthy. Therefore, no poor person can remain hungry unless a wealthy person consumes his [i.e. the poor person's] food [that lies in the wealth of the wealthy]. And God will ask the wealthy regarding this right of the poor. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*, al-Hikmah 325)

Security in the Ideal Islamic Society

Security is one of the most important topics in Islam and is related to many of the dimensions in the lives of each and every individual of the society. In today's world it is also one of the most complicated concepts and is something that has occupied the minds of many thinkers. One of the factors that has contributed to the difficulty in achieving a correct understanding of this concept, is the part that it plays in many of the aspects of our lives such as health, economics, personal and social justice, politics, faith, honor, etc. Of the different branches that have been stated, 'spiritual security' and 'individual and social security' can also be mentioned.

Spiritual security: According to the teachings of Islam, the basis of security is faith in the Divine, which encompasses all of man's dimensions of existence. In spiritual security, the basis is the security of the divine, faith and security from punishment and poverty so that in this manner man can achieve a certain amount of trust and conviction and come to possess the 'tranquil soul'. The foundation of this spiritual security comes about upon entering the Dar as Salam (Abode of Peace) that is the security that God has promised His choicest servants when they take refuge in Him. The one who takes refuge in the ultimate power of God will never fear others since he knows that his God is the most powerful being and that is the best refuge of all.

The Prophet (s) said:

إِنَّمَا سُمِّيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِناً لِأَنَّهُ يُؤْمِنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَيُجِيزُ أَمَانَه

The believer has been named the "mu'min" since he seeks security (al-amān) from God and God [in response to this request] grants him security. (*Wasā'il al-Shī'a*, v. 12, p. 233)

In reality, every form of insecurity stems from faithlessness and qualities that stand opposite to belief such as polytheism, oppression and imperialism. Securing favorable conditions for the upbringing and development of individuals, both personally and socially, is one of the main effects of the acquisition of security in the eyes of Islam.

Individual and social security: This means that the individual is not physically or spiritually agitated over his life, wealth, family and anything else that is connected to him and that he lives peacefully. He is not afraid that any individual or social institution will act aggressively against him or the things connected to him.

According to the teachings of Islam, this type of security must be sought out in piety, respect to the rights of others, the establishment of justice, the protection of the oppressed, fighting against oppression and corruption and also the securing of the legitimate needs and freedoms of people. The religion of Islam has formulated weighty punishments for oppression and the tyrants and also those who transgress against the lives, wealth and family of others. It does all of this with the hope of establishing justice in society and always encourages people to respect the rights of others.

Another set of laws that have been established with the intent of establishing social security in society are those that serve to prevent crimes. For example, it is good to point to the hijab that is actually a social law that encompasses many different aspects of society. This serves to lessen the sexual impulses of those who have little faith and to create a very healthy environment in the Islamic society. Hijab is not only rooted in the nobility of the woman and the honorable manner that Islam looks at her but also serves to prevent many social evils from coming into existence.

Some of the commands and recommendations of the religion of Islam tell us that security, in the eyes of Islam, is not only true of things such as wealth, life and family but also includes the person, honor and nobility of the human being. This is true to such an extent that the Holy Prophet (s) said: "The least amount of disbelief is that man hears something from his brother in faith and memorizes it with the intent to dishonor him later on. This type of person does not have the least amount of goodness in him." (*al-Qummī*, v 1, p 41)

Pillars of Wisdom

Imam Ali (as) in explaining the meaning of the testimony "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah", stated: "The statement 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah' expresses that bearing testimony is not possible, except by recognition of the heart. It is saying: know that no object of worship exists except Allah, the Mighty, and certainly any object of worship other than Allah is invalid. No refuge from Allah exists except towards Him and there is no salvation from evil, suffering and distress caused by provocateurs, except through Him." (*Al-Tawhid*, Shaykh al-Sadūq, p. 239)

Imam Ali (as) stated:

"I have come to know that every one of them entered upon Muslim women and other women under the protection of Islam and took away their ornaments from legs, arms, necks and ears and no woman could resist it except by pronouncing the verse,

"We are for Allah and to Him we shall return." (2:156)

Then they got back laden with wealth without any wound or loss of life. If any Muslim dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before me.

(*Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 27)

Conclusion

Based upon what was stated, God the All-Wise, Who created man and all creatures, has the knowledge of the states of His creatures, their needs and also the manner in which to satisfy these wants. Since man is two dimensional (worldly and spiritual) he does not have the ability to properly distinguish all of his needs and the proper manner to fulfill them. It is for this reason that God has sent the prophets (as) to the people, in order to show them the manner in how to live properly, so that human beings can attain all of their respective spiritual and material destinies (which is nothing other than the nearness to the source of all perfections, God) and thus attain felicity in this world and the next.

The felicity of man in this world is not limited to the individual dimensions of his life, and the religion of Islam, being a comprehensive religion and the last of them, has formulated laws with the intent of creating a society in which each one of the individual members considers itself as a part of the one big family, which is the nation of Islam. It strives to create justice in all aspects of man's life and to fight against every form of oppression and discrimination. In this manner it hopes to help the Islamic nation grow in each of its different dimensions and it is clear that a healthy society such as this can lay the ground for the perfection of its individual members.

Reading Comprehension

1. What is the definition of felicity according to Islam? Explain why the different schools of thought and religions differ regarding the definition of felicity and why they are divergent in relation to its instances?

2. Why does man need to understand himself in order to achieve exuberance? Explain how self-awareness can lead to the knowledge of God.

3. The final purpose of man is, in reality, to reach God. Explain what this means and how it is possible to reach God, according to this lesson.

4. What is the relationship between knowledge, faith, and action?

5. Explain the following passage and also the meaning of piety: The best means to achieve felicity is piety.

6. Explain the two main purposes for sending the divine prophets (as) in the view of the Qur'an.

7. Why does man submit to the laws of society even though he desires absolute freedom? Why does he practically bind himself to these laws?

8. Compare man-made laws with religious ones and state their weaknesses or strengths.

9. Explain the relation of worldly felicity to eternal felicity from the Islamic perspective.

10. State and explain three of the distinctions of the ideal Islamic society.

11. How many different types of commands does Islam have with the aim of creating social security? Explain each one of them briefly.

Glossary of Key Terms

Abrahamic Religions: is used for those religions that were inspired by the ancient tradition of Abraham in the Semitic writings. All Abrahamic religions believe in prophethood, namely that God chooses people to whom He sends messages either directly or through an angel. Islam, Christianity and Judaism are in this category.

Al-'Ālamīn: Commentators have interpreted this term in two ways; it either means the different realms created by Allah, such as this world, *al-Barzakh* and the hereafter, or means the intelligent inhabitants of this world, which is a high number.

Al-Barzakh: Literally, it denotes a barrier or distance that sets two things apart. In religious parlance, it refers to the life that immediately follows death and precedes the Resurrection. This realm is designated as al-Barzakh because it separates, so to speak, the material world from the Final World (al-Ākhirah), which begins with the advent of Resurrection. Other designations for this world are the World of the Grave ('Ālam al-qabr) or the Imaginal World ('Ālam al-mithāl).

Divine Unity in Agency: The doctrine that the only being who enjoys absolutely independent agency and self-sufficient power is God. All other agents—whether spiritual or material, animate or inanimate—lack independent power and agency. All created beings derive their power and agency from God.

Fasting: Every year in the month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sundown; abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations.

Al-Fitrah (Innate Nature): Meaning creation that is innovative and unprecedented. It denotes the properties peculiar to human nature and the innate inclinations and intuitions that the human being possesses by nature. It is the tendency of the human towards spiritual perfection and is related to his/her spirit, like the love of beauty, pursuit of knowledge and recognition of God.

Al-'Ilm al-ladunnī: is knowledge which a servant of God directly receives from Him, without a human or angel intermediary. As God bestows this knowledge directly, there is no process of teaching and learning. This type of knowledge was obtained by the Prophets and Imams.

Materialism: The view that everything that actually exists is material (i.e., physical). This view leads to the denial of all immaterial realities, including God.

Al-Nafs al-Ammārah: The agent within the human soul that commands to do evil deeds is called the Commanding Self (al-nafs al-ammārah).

Premise: An argument typically comprises two or more premises. It is by putting these premises together and reflecting on them in unison that the mind is able to reach a certain conclusion. Consider this example: (first premise) All human beings strive after perfection; (second premise) Ahmad is a human being; (conclusion) Ahmad strives after perfection.

Principle of Causality: The rational proposition specifying that an effect—a contingent being—needs a cause. Based on this principle, it is impossible that effects should come into being without a cause. As such, we may state this principle as follows: Every effect needs a cause. The existence of an effect is a clear indicator that its cause must also exist.

Al-Qibla: is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during *al-salah*. It is fixed as the direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca.

Al-Rabb: is used to designate one who manages something in such a way that the managed entity progresses in an orderly fashion toward realizing its purpose.

Supernatural: Describes that which is not subject to the laws of nature or, more accurately, that which is said to exist above and beyond nature.

Al-Tahaddī: Literally means to pick a fight or to match something and in Islamic terms, denotes when one challenges others to match him/her in an act, writing or speech. One of the dimensions of the inimitability of the Quran is tahaddī.

Al-Wuḍū: is the Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for prayers and reciting the Quran.

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